







D. L. Grosser.

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*Eric W. Thomas.*

# PAROCHIAL SERMONS.

VOL. III.

BY THE

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REPRINTED FROM THE PLAIN SERMONS BY CONTRIBUTORS TO  
THE "TRACTS FOR THE TIMES."

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE present Volume, having originally been the third in the series entitled "Plain Sermons, by Contributors to the Tracts for the Times," the Sermons contained in it were preached earlier than those of the two preceding Volumes. The latest was preached in the year in which they appeared, 1838. The series was planned by the Rev. Isaac Williams, with a view to exhibit the practical teaching of the writers of the Tracts; the aspect of which, as being the revival of half-forgotten truths, was necessarily somewhat controversial. A more private object was to obtain in this way the publication of Sermons of one, who exercised through others a considerable influence, but whose modest estimate of himself made it hopeless that he would publish anything under his own name—the Rev. Thomas Keble, the thoughtful brother of the author of "The Christian Year." The series having been broken by the lamented loss of the most remarkable volume in it, that of the Rev. J. H. Newman, the writer, learning that his own volume had long been left out of print, thought it best to follow Dr. Newman's example in re-printing it separately. For the original series could not be restored, and it seemed to the writer unreal to fill

up the place of the lost gem by Sermons, however valuable, of any other of the writers of the Tracts. The series, then, known as the "Plain Sermons," had ceased to be.

The wish of the writer has been that the Sermons of the several Contributors should now be published under their own names. It will be a great gain that the simple parochial teaching of the two brothers, which formed so large a portion of the series, should thus be restored to the Church<sup>a</sup>. It used to be noticed at an early period, that a visit to the Vicar of Bisley, who was by some years our senior, was attended by the unconscious re-appearance of some of his thoughts in the pulpit of S. Mary's;—one specimen of the silent and unconscious influence of one, known to the world only as a simple Parish-Priest.

The subjects of the Sermons in my own Volume were determined, mostly by the season or festival, or some other occasion upon which they were preached. They were preached at intervals and to different congregations; so that there was no connection between them. They were severally somewhat fuller than usual, being mostly preached to those to whom the writer was a stranger, and often, in those excited times, a "persona suspecta;" and, being mostly single Sermons, the writer had no opportunity to supply omissions in any succeeding Sermons. They are reprinted now, without alterations except some of style, and the omission here and there of references to the Church of Rome, which certainly have no place in ordi-

<sup>a</sup> It appears from the notice at the end of the concluding Volume that John Keble was the author of two entire Volumes, and of 50 Sermons in smaller fascicles; Thomas Keble, of 55 Sermons.

nary parochial Sermons. Else, since they were Sermons of a certain date, it seemed truer not to insert anything which the writer did not preach at that date, such as the power of the keys, although the Sermon was incomplete without it.

CHRIST CHURCH.

EASTER-TIDE, 1873.



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## SERMON I.

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### SUDDEN DEATH<sup>a</sup>.

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St. Matt. xxiv. 40—42.

*“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”*

DEATH is at all times awful. God has put in all His creatures a natural shrinking from it. All avoid what will bring it, shudder at its coming. It is in itself, whatever it bring with it, exceedingly awful. It is contrary to the original purpose of our being; it is contrary to God, Who is Life; it is the penalty of sin, even in the animal world, who share in some mysterious way in our fall, for “by sin death entered into the world;” and so God has impressed even upon the animal

<sup>a</sup> The occasion of the following sermon (1837) was this: about ten days before, two miners had arrived at Sark, from Cornwall, in the same vessel; on the day previous, a stormy day, they had been employed for some time on works at the landing-place; one had left it, but seeing some of the works

creation a dislike of death, that therein He might show to us that death was not in His order of things; that death and sin came into this world together; that death was by His law, as long as we remained subject to His law, a stranger to our world, as long as it was His world, and had not fallen from Him, and so become subject to him who is now the god of this world; and that now the creature is "made subject to vanity," because it remained not subject to Him, by Whom and for Whom it was created.

Still more awful is the death of man. What follows upon it immediately we know not; the spirit freed from the body dies not, sleeps not; it parts into a new state of things, but how it is led thither, what its feelings are, by whom it is met, we know not; we are told that the good are conducted by angels into Abraham's bosom; but whether all who are indeed carried thither know that they are so, and that by angels, we know not; angels minister to us here, but we are unconscious of it. One thing they must know, that

shake, went back to secure it; while waiting for a few minutes for a bolt, the same wave took both; the one nearest to the sea was held by some of the machinery, the other who had returned, was swept into it; though a strong swimmer, he sunk after a time within sight of his companions, the ropes thrown to him being carried away by the waves. He had already passed the largest portion of man's life, had been brought through many perils of his dangerous employment, and his death was the more impressive on his companions, because out of the ordinary course of those perils, and his skill connected him with every work of difficulty in the new undertaking.



they are away from this world of time and sense, that they are in eternity, that their trial is over, that they are being borne to the judgement-seat of Christ by Whom their eternal doom is to be pronounced. Doubtless they have within them some anticipations of that doom: doubtless their whole past life, which shall be more clearly revealed to them by Him, stands out in some degree before them. We know that to St. Paul "to die" was "to be with Christ;" we believe that He graciously manifests Himself to the "just made perfect," and gradually prepares them to "see God;" but what the first sight of Him may be to the soul, as yet unacquitted at His judgement-seat, we know not. We know that to the Beloved Disciple while on earth, though "in the spirit," the sight was so awful, that "when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, as one dead." How know we, what it will be to us, who have loved Him so frailly, disobeyed His loving commands so often, done oftentimes what in us lay to destroy ourselves, for whom He died, and have been so little conformed to Him? What to see all at once that blackness of the hourly ingratitude, of which we here think so little, before that so loving Face, once marred for love of us, now looking on us with at best reproachful love. Again, we hear of Satan's "disputing with Michael the archangel about the body of Moses." We may well believe that he will dispute to the last, that he appears in the presence of God as an "accuser of the brethren," that he will not part with his prey, until "the Lord rebuke him." Then also the passage is spoken of

as fearful; fearful to be trodden alone, and yet alone it must be trodden; none may accompany us, no human friend avail us; not fearful at the last to those who tread it leaning upon God, yet awful even then. "Yea, *though* I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Supported by God's past and present mercies, *even then* the Psalmist will not fear; not because it is not in itself very fearful, not because he would not by nature shrink from it, but because God would be with him, support him when trembling, and enlighten its gloom. Death has been oftentimes awful even to God's saints. Histories of the death-beds of the good tell us how they have shrunk from it; they have known better than ordinary persons how awful it is; they have known themselves, have felt the scars and spots of past sin; they have prayed to see their sins, to see all they have been, and have shrunk from appearing before the Judgement-seat even of their merciful Judge and Saviour. Satan is busy at that hour, "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time;" and God permits him to torment with fear and strong terror many, that they may repent and loathe themselves, and confess that they deserve God's wrath, that so He may, for Christ's sake, put it from Him. Then also death is the decisive point of life. Everything in life looks onward or tends to that hour. It makes all sure. It binds all fast. To all it is the end of trial, the beginning of blessedness or woe; it is the last trial to be undergone.



All repentance, faith, trust, love, prayer, devotion, are summed up by that hour; its trial well over, the faithful soul is delivered, is secure; the stream is passed, the shore won. But there is this one trial, and that the more awful, because it is the last, because it winds up all, because there is no repenting of its imperfection, and so our Church teaches to pray during our lives, from our first prayer within her walls, that "in the hour of death" our "good Lord" would "deliver us;" she teaches us to pray by the graves of our brethren, when their last conflict is over, that "we may not at our last hour for any pains of death fall from God." Then, too, we are at once to see the fruits of all our past lives, to see, if we escape, the narrowness, in many cases, of our escape, how nigh we were bringing ourselves to perdition, and how God's merciful arm rescued us.

All death is awful to hear of. If we know a person ever so little, or have only heard of him, it is awful to hear of his death. Be it but one whom we saw long ago, or who has been spoken of in the world, or whose friends we know, if anything bring him individually before our eyes, so that we think of him as a distinct human being, it is awful to hear that he is gone. We realize in him, what takes place in every death, that a soul is past from this world to judgement. People shrink, if but for a moment, for him and for themselves; and the passing feeling of pain and sympathy, and the instinctive prayer that he may find mercy, is a confession that death is awful, and the way to life narrower than we are wont to think of.

Still more awful is sudden death. For as death is the fruit of sin and the token of God's displeasure, and contrary to His natural ordinances, so and still more is *sudden* death. Not that we are to judge of those upon whom it falls; God forbid! Our Saviour, in the example of those "upon whom the tower of Siloam fell," has warned us in all such events to judge ourselves, not others. Still, though not necessarily to them, it is a mark of God's displeasure in and on the world. It startles us always; we feel that there is something awful in it. Like the lightning, or the earthquake, or the pestilence, it bespeaks God's wrath, and His judgements. It would not be, but for His wrath. We feel that if it is not more than awful to any upon whom it has fallen, it is a great mercy of God. We should shrink from it ourselves. We should wish for the most part to have notice of our death, to wind up our repentances, to be disciplined by its approach, to receive the comforts of our holy Faith, to be prayed by and for, and to be commended to God by those whom He has appointed to bless in His name. We should wish once more to receive the tokens of our Saviour's mercy, His Body which was given, His Blood which was shed for us, to be united with Him, and in that union, to wrestle with the last enemy, and in His strength to trample on him. These natural feelings are true. Job, though he "knew" that his "Redeemer lived," prayed for some while of rest, that he might "take comfort a little, before he went whence he should not return, to the land of darkness itself; the shadow

of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness <sup>b</sup>." The very words wherein he speaks thereof, show the awe which God hath impressed thereon. He too, hath marked upon the language of His book, that untimely death, or sudden death, are contrary to what He speaks of as the happiest lot. Although He hath shortened our days to "threescore years and ten," and they too be "labour and vanity, so soon pass they away and are gone," yet doth He speak of it as a blessing to fulfil this our course, "to come to our grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season <sup>c</sup>." "Length of days are in the right hand of wisdom;" "the fear of the Lord prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days," is the Psalmist's prayer. "The days of his youth hast thou shortened, and covered him with dishonour," is the Psalmist's complaint. One need not prove this, one need only remind you of it. Nor is it repealed now; God may now, as of old, perfect in a little space those whom He wills: "he being made perfect in a short time fulfilled a long time; for his soul pleased the Lord: therefore hastened He to take him away from among the wicked <sup>d</sup>." But still the law is unrepealed. The promise of the fifth commandment is spoken of in the New Testament. Shortness of life and untimely death are frequently annexed to sin. God is a God of order; and the happiest lot (except in the case of martyrs) is that of serving Him faithfully in a man's generation, during the

<sup>b</sup> Job x. 22.<sup>c</sup> Ib. v. 26.<sup>d</sup> Wisd. iv. 13, 14.

whole of life's appointed course: that the sun should not "go down while it is yet day."

We speak of continuance in this life, of restoration from sickness, as being "a mercy," though to the perfected "to die" is to "be with Christ." Yea, the Apostle says of one who "was sick nigh unto death," that "God had mercy on him<sup>e</sup>;" and so sanctions our way of speaking, and teaches us not to be over-confident, but to take thankfully the lengthening of our life, if so we may be the better prepared to yield up our account.

Additionally awful is it when, under the same outward circumstances, as our Saviour speaketh, "the one is taken and the other left;" for then we cannot but see God's hand therein. Why He did so, we cannot presume to judge. But that of two He should select the one and leave the other; that two should be parted, the one for life, the other for death, must have *some* meaning; it may have very many. It may be, quite separate from any thing in the persons themselves, to show how He doth as He wills; how all things are in His hand, and not in man's. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up<sup>f</sup>." We all readily acknowledge that such is the case, and most men in act and deed as strongly deny it. They confess with the mouth that "the earth is the Lord's," and in act do as if all depended upon man. We are obliged many times to act as if things depended upon ourselves; yea, things seem in great measure entrusted to ourselves, and so it is the more an act of faith

<sup>e</sup> Phil. ii. 27.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 6.



to believe, in truth and in heart, that they do depend upon the Lord and upon Him only. And so it is often seen in the beginning of undertakings<sup>§</sup>, how God interposeth in some way, by some unawaited cross or check, in order to teach us in act that God but alloweth them to go on: that as He hath interfered thus far, so He can and may still further; that He hath His eyes upon us, and that ours must be turned to Him; that what we do, we must do in submission to His will, and in dependence upon Him, and with a fear of Him, lest He hinder it altogether, and destroy both us and it. (2.) Then also we see how little we know of His ways, though yet His choice, and His alone, is wise and good. Of these two, we trust, different as have been their lots, the one was in mercy taken, the other in mercy spared; and yet after-life and future diligence and patience in well-doing can alone show whether this present mercy be indeed a blessing to him who was spared. A great mercy it was in God's purpose. May He grant that it may accomplish the purpose for which it was sent, in more earnest, steadfast love of Him, and keeping of His commandments! So have we also been chosen, chosen while others have been left, chosen to the blessings and gifts of the Gospel. Yet may it appear that it had been better for a man to have been left, than, having been made a sharer of all these mercies, not to have been faithful. (3.) Then it has an awful meaning as the

<sup>§</sup> The congregation, of whom one had been suddenly removed, had been engaged about ten months on a mine then discovered.

image of the Day of Judgement. To that Day our Lord's words in the text refer, and of that we have had a picture before our eyes. It will indeed be different then. For now to both we trust there was mercy. *Then* some shall be "taken to meet their Lord in the air," others "left," left by God, left finally, left as refuse to be burnt up, left out of the care, and protection, and notice of God, left to the Devil and his angels, to be with him tormented for ever and ever. He who hath now been delivered is set before you as a sign and a token of that which shall be, that you may be reminded of the Day of Judgement and of your own accounts therein.

The more that one reflects upon the history of this our brother<sup>h</sup>, the more awefully strange it seems, as you yourselves have said and felt. To have passed a life in all manner of dangers, to have approached the term of natural dissolution, yet in full strength, and then to die, not by such dangers as might have been apprehended, but by a danger which might, humanly speaking, have been avoided; to be carried off, just at the moment before he would have left the place of danger, after he had been some time there without apparent danger; and when carried off, to perish, when it might seem as if he could yet have been preserved, this surely is the very "finger of God" pointing out somewhat to us, as if God had thus lately brought him hither, only to be a sign and an example to us; that in all your works where-with he was in your minds connected, he, thus

<sup>h</sup> See p. 1. note.

dead, might preach to you, "in the midst of life we are in death," that he might repeat to you your Lord's words, "Watch, for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come."

But to what end are we to use this? To talk for a while of the uncertainty of life, of the awfulness of God's visitations, that "in the midst of life we are in death," of the wonderfulness of His deliverances, and then, after a few solemn thoughts or commonplace expressions, to pass on to other subjects, and do, and act, and think, laugh and be merry, just as before? God forbid! We feel within us an instinctive repugnance to turn from these visitations to other thoughts or words, and this implanted dislike is a proof the more that we should not do so. Yet this is continually the way in which men use, or rather neglect, these visitations of God. It is not solemn thoughts, when we again see the spot, where the boiling surges swept him away, or when the howling of the wind or strife of waters bring back to us the thought, that yesterday they swept him to his account: they are not *passing* solemn thoughts, which God's awful dealings should at any time produce; but a continued impression of them, a living under them, an acting in consequence of them. He doth not these terrible things to produce certain feelings and thoughts, or that we should for a time talk, though it be edifyingly, of His ways, but to scare men from any thing of evil in them, to teach them to "set their own houses in order," because "they" too "must die;" to awe them, and to make them live under that awe. They should be goads to us

to spring forward, to do something which perhaps we had before been hesitating about, but which ought to be done; to be more earnest about our salvation, to disencumber ourselves of some evil habit, to repent more earnestly past sins, to press onward. They are so many warnings to us, and we shall have to give account of them to God, how we have used them. It is *not* the right use of them, to think solemnly only, and not to do. It is not simply that we may expect the like: we may indeed; and of those who in this island have heard of it, it is very likely that some will, though not perhaps in the like way, die suddenly<sup>1</sup>. Sudden deaths are frequent enough to make any one think that he *may* die suddenly. Yet this is not all. For many men do not die suddenly, and so men often dismiss the thought and call these visitations awful when they do come, but still think that they do not very much concern them, and thus take occasion of God's warnings, to harden their hearts. The uncertainty of life is almost a proverb, and so people use it like a proverb, think it enough to acknowledge the truth of it, and then pass on as if it concerned them not, as if it were not of their *own* lives, of their *own* being called to account, of their own being *suddenly* brought to judgement, of which they were speaking. God's mercies and God's judgements alike hardened Pharaoh's heart; and

<sup>1</sup> Within a year, the Seigneur of the island was, with two others, swallowed up in the same sea; the boat in which he was, "sank," in a moment, "like lead in the mighty waters," in sight of those on shore; happily, in the midst of plans of good for the Church and islanders.



whoso reflects a little, acts for a while, and then goes on as before, is the very likeness of Pharaoh, and is preparing for himself Pharaoh's end. Whoso is not lastingly softened by God's calls is hardened by them.

But it is not simply that we may have a death *in like way* sudden; it is not only untimely, or violent, or unforeseen death, which is sudden. All unprepared death is sudden death; yea, in the true sense, it is the only sudden death; for it is the only death which comes unexpected. The true Christian has long been on the watch for it; he has acted with a view to it, thought on it, looked for it, prepared to receive it. It comes to him but as the evening of the day to the labouring man. He has known that now is the time when he must work, that "the night cometh when no man can work;" and so when the night cometh, it doth but finish his appointed labour: it is but his summons to "rest from his labours, and his works do follow him<sup>k</sup>." He hath looked for it "as a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work<sup>l</sup>." And now it is come. Whether at the evening of his days, or at midnight, or at the cockerowing, or in the morning, his Lord, though He come suddenly, findeth him not sleeping<sup>m</sup>. It is but the summons which he has long been waiting; it is but the voice of his own Lord. But unprepared death (come when it will) is sudden; be it the slowest that ever was sent as God's messenger, it is sudden; the work unfinished, perhaps scarce begun, and now no time

<sup>k</sup> Rev. xiv. 13.

<sup>l</sup> Job vii. 2.

<sup>m</sup> S. Mark xiii. 35, 36.

to do it ; trials wasted, and now no more to be recovered ; occasions of doing the will of God, of resisting Satan, doing God's commandments, lost and not to be recalled ; what can one say, or how can one think of the manifold guilt and misery of such a life and such a death ? And yet whosoever is not watching, is living, more or less, such a life, and preparing for himself such a death.

For this is the very teaching which our Lord Himself draws from these same dealings of God, "Watch *therefore*, for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come." "Watch therefore, lest coming suddenly, He find you sleeping ; and what I say unto you, I say unto *all*, Watch." It is not then a warning to the careless only, to them who are asleep in sin ; it is a warning to all ; to those who are not watching, to watch ; to those who are watching, to watch more diligently. It was said to Apostles. Shall we think we need it not ? We should only show that we know not what to "watch" is.

For what is to watch for His coming, or for our death ? (1.) It would be always to have our death before us, as He, our pattern, ever had His before Him. We are the disciples of the Crucified, Who had the Cross ever before Him, and such as He was, we must seek to be. Yet see how He had it ever before His eyes. I would speak reverently, yet as a pattern to us, He lets us see that it was so. When His Disciples were thinking of grandeur, He ever spoke of His own Cross ; it was the hour for which He came "into the world ;" the Baptism which He was "straitened till it was

accomplished." As was the Master, such must the Disciples be; our Master had death and the Cross ever before Him, and so must we. And so, of old time, holy men took means continually to remind themselves of death, what after death their bodies would be. Their life was a daily meditation of death, and so a daily preparation for eternity, an unlearning of this our living death or dying life, a practice of immortality. The very way in which many would turn away from this, proves the need of it. It would, they say, damp the spirits, disable them from doing anything, cast a gloom over things, destroy the enjoyment of life. It would of a truth change the whole of *their* life. But what is saying this, other than to say that they are *not* watching, are not habitually looking for it; that things to which they now give themselves, would be spoiled and lose their relish; that the things on which their minds now continually dwell in their journey, have nothing in common with the close of their lives; that they wish to forget that they are on a pilgrimage; that they would fain have their home here, where the children of God are "strangers and foreigners;" that their lives have nothing to do with the end of life? They witness against themselves. Yes, that act, thought, or word is wrong, which a man would not do, think, or speak, with the thoughts of Death and Judgement in his mind. And if any think the constant thoughts of death would change much of his life, it may be a sure witness to him that much should be changed.

This, then, is the first part of watching, daily

to set before us, and to labour to act as those who are to give account, and know not when the account may be called for; daily to see to our state, to leave nothing to be done till to-morrow, to look to our daily task of duty, repentance, prayer, petition of forgiveness, to lie down in our beds as in our graves, resigning our souls to God. And this will be a great means of a particular sort of watchfulness, viz., to be on our guard, not on the whole only, but in our several actions; to be on the look-out (so to speak), to watch in our doings one by one, wherein the enemy assails us, where our greatest danger is, wherein we are most likely to fail; and then to apply the means given us. It is, to watch that we may pray, and pray that we may watch; to watch beforehand the temptation as it is coming, to pray against it, and in it; to cut off all occasions to it that we can; but it is also to watch in all our actions. For as there are some sins which most beset us, so there is scarcely any action, wherein sin may not surprise us; scarcely any sin, into which a man, if he watch not, may not fall. "Behold, I come as a thief," saith our Lord, "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame," i. e., Blessed is he who by continual watching keepeth that robe of white, wherewith Christ has clothed him, and defileth it not, lest it be taken from him, and he, being separated from Christ by his sins, be exposed naked and defenceless to our enemy, and "awake to shame and everlasting contempt."

My brethren, they are moments such as these,



in which new efforts are to be made, new diligence to be used. You speak of that which has happened as awful; let it awe you. Dispensations of this sort are frequent, but do not very often come so closely under our eyes as did this nor warn us so solemnly that it is not of our foresight or wisdom, that one is taken, and the other left, but that He doeth, spareth, taketh, killeth and maketh alive, not as we should think, but at His own will. One of this small congregation, one of this island, who had lately come in health and strength hither, swept away, though seemingly removed from the peril by which the other was threatened but escaped! The narrower the circle out of which he is taken, the more God warns those who are around him, nay, he seems by God's dealings to have been brought hither, only to furnish this example of the suddenness of his final calling. God does not this for nought: He showeth not His power for nought. He, the Father of the fatherless and God of the widow, does not, for nought, make suddenly young children fatherless and a wife a widow. And yet it is as though for nought, unless they take heed who see it. They "make the counsel of God" to themselves "of none effect," if they only talk for a while solemnly about it, have some impressions of awe, and then turn to do everything as they did before. Yea, it were worse than of nought, for he that profiteth not by God's warnings, maketh them to himself judgement. Seize, then, the present moment; God has so ordered it, that the day which followed thereon, should be this His own day of rest, and so gives you the more time to consider

how you ought to act, while the sight of the dying man, struggling in the waves, is yet before your eyes. Think what you would have wished to have undone, what to have done, had it been thou who in these few minutes wert to be brought before thy Judge, and do it. God's judgements, even when they impress men for a time, fade away more rapidly than they would think who are most awed by them, unless they be used instantly. Yea, they will fade away over-soon, unless they be fixed by acting upon them. Let them not pass away in feelings, but act. Do something; seek to amend at once whatever thou seest or thinkest may be amiss in thyself. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and He will abundantly pardon him." Do something which thou otherwise wouldst not have done; and may He who sent this warning, "teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto" the only true "wisdom," how we may be saved in that Great Day; and that whether in this life we live out the full measure of our years, or come early to our graves, we may ever be found watching, that we may be "taken" to dwell with Him, and not be "left," but may receive His blessing; "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing; yea, I say unto you, Blessed is that servant."

## SERMON II.

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### CONVERSION.

(PREACHED ON THE FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.)

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Acts ix. 6.

*“And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”*

THE conversion of St. Paul in some respects resembles, in some differs from, what from time to time takes place among Christians. It differs from them in that it was St. Paul's first call; it called him from the sinfulness of his state by nature, it did not *re-call* him from sin into which he had fallen from a state of grace; it called him to be made “a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of heaven,” it did not *re-call* him to return as an erring child to seek anew by repentance his forfeited inheritance. It called him to be a partaker of the gifts and blessings of Baptism, it did not recall him by virtue of that Baptism to seek again with tears its wasted gifts. It brought him for the first time within his Lord's fold, it did

not bring him back as a straying and lost sheep. Yet in so far as it was a call from God, (though the feelings with which our calls must be received are very different,) the call is the same, and our duties the same. In some sort, it is an image of what should take place in all. For in its widest sense "conversion" is a turning towards God: and if, by His mercy, we have been preserved from being turned altogether away from Him, yet none of us can say, that we have been, or are turned to Him, as fully as we might be. It is well if the full purpose of our heart be to Him, if we knowingly keep back nothing from Him, if we labour to fix our unsteadfastness on Him, have no by-ends, are not seeking, half-consciously, our satisfaction or our reward in any thing out of Him. Still we are at best, but unsteadfast, seeking to be knit into one in Him; detained and lingering amid this life's joys, or comforts or ease, and seeking to be quickened in our path to Him; with manifold ends which it is our duty to accomplish, and seeking that all our ends shall have no end but Him. "Who can say I have kept my heart clean, I am pure from sin?" Conversion, then, in its widest sense, is a course of being conformed to God, a learning to have Him more simply in our minds, to be turned wholly to Him, solely to Him, never to part from Him, ever to follow Him, our Sun of Righteousness, wherever His pathway is; in the morning, noon, evening of our life; in His bright shining, or when He hideth His face; opening our hearts to Him, to have their warmth, their health, their life, from Him. And since this were Heaven



itself, and we have not yet, at the best, "attained, nor are yet perfected," we all, in this sense, ever need conversion; we have ever some weaknesses, from which to seek to be freed, infirmities of which to be healed, bands and chains woven round us by past sins, from which to long to be loosed.

But, besides this, Conversion may be taken in a narrower sense, for the first turning of the soul to God after it has been estranged from Him. This, had we been faithful, we never should have needed. In Holy Baptism, we were all "made children of God," and we never need have left our Father's house; we were made "members of Christ," and if we would, His life, into Whom we were then engrafted, would have flowed more fully into us, according to our needs, filling us according to our capacities, hallowing our childhood, strengthening our youth, controlling us in the perils of opening manhood, mastering each wayward thought, subduing each rising appetite. It was pledged to us, had we been willing to receive it. Had we admitted it, it would have flowed on equably and gently through us, and we had never needed that sharp, though wholesome remedy, whereby the way must be again reopened to it, when once we have closed it. We were "made inheritors of heaven;" we need never have stood in fear and alarm, lest we had forfeited it, nor have "sought it carefully with tears." We might have ever looked on humbly to it, not as our right, but as His Who purchased it for us and made it ours, and has given us the earnest of it, and gave us, day by day, the forgiveness of the trespasses we prayed for, that we might not forfeit

it. This is the happy lot of those, who, though more or less slowly, still steadfastly on the whole, grow on in their Baptismal grace; with their falls, the giddinesses and forgetfulness of childhood, yet never interposing any such grievous sin, as should check the influx of that life in them. Supported by prayer, strengthened by Confirmation, admitted into closer communion in the Holy Eucharist, they are, line by line, and feature by feature, unobserved, insensibly, because unceasingly, "changed," the Apostle says, "into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Lord, the Spirit." These need no marked change, because the change we all need is ever going on, unmarked, within them. And many more might these blessed cases be, would parents but more bring home to their memory the blessings pledged in Baptism; that their children have been redeemed out of the evil world, and need not be conformed to it; that they have been received under the protection of the saving Name, and may dwell there in safety "under the shadow of the Almighty;" that weak, frail, wayward, self-willed, as, through the unsubdued remains of their old nature, they appear and are, they have still lodged within them a hidden strength, mightier than the world and Satan and the powers of darkness, even His strength Who "hath overcome the world," and trampled upon Satan; that He can and will triumph in these His young soldiers, if they are taught even now to fight; that He, by His childhood, has sanctified their childish age; that out of the mouths of such as them He hath perfected praise; that of such as these is the kingdom of heaven.

And not parents only, but sponsors have their duty; and it is sad, that persons so often vow in the names of the little ones, who forget the vow made in their own. One cannot think without awe, how persons in the children's names, renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, in God's holy presence, and thereby bear witness that they have themselves renounced them, while yet they obey the lust of the flesh, which they renounced; or how others think that their duty to these their god-children, or children in God, is over as soon as they leave the sacred font, as though they could be fathers and mothers, and that in God, one moment, strangers ever after, whereas the Church solemnly warns them of lasting duties. It is sad also, that well-disposed persons should so shrink from the office of God-parents, which is a charitable work to the poor little ones, who are thus brought to Christ, received in His arms, and for whom, if they can do no more, they can yet daily pray. Were parents and sponsors more faithful, we might hope that children of our Church might grow up more as they were made, children of God.

But these, as things now are, are the happy few! Most of us, it is to be feared, have stained, some more, some less, our baptismal robe, and must wash it with the tears of penitence. Most of us have turned aside from the path, and so have had to be turned into it again. Most have turned away from God, and so needed to be "converted," or turned to God. Of most we must fear, that if they be not conscious of having turned into the path again, they are not in it. For too truly,

“wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth unto destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.” Many there are, who leave the narrow path of life; few, in proportion, who seem, having left it, to recover it. So that it has been said<sup>a</sup>, that more readily may we find such as have persevered in the right way, than who, having left it, have by a solid conversion turned back into it. Yet here also is a difference. Some, who leave it, leave it altogether by gross and flagrant sin, such that they can have no doubt whom they are serving, and on what path they are. Some are drawn aside, step by step, from it, never thinking to have left it altogether, trying, as it were, to keep one foot on it, even while they are conscious that they are halting with the other; looking back wistfully to it; doing things which may keep them in it; looking back to God, even while straying, more or less deeply, amid the vanities of the world. And as the fall is different, so is the restoration of those whom God, in His infinite mercy, restores. Some He strikes to the earth, like St. Paul, at one blow, that they lie there speechless, terrified, confounded; some He leads gently back so that one can scarcely speak of any one conversion, as there was scarcely any complete estrangement; but God seems to have lifted them up from where they lay, first on their knees and the palms of their hands; then to stand trembling; then He strengtheneth

<sup>a</sup> S. Ambrose, de Pœnit. ii. 10. “I have found more easily those who have retained innocence than who have performed penitence befittingly.” De Ob. Valent. § 14. “Many fall into errors, few amend them.”



them, and saith, "Peace; be strong, yea be strong," and they are strengthened, and can say, "Let my Lord speak, for Thou hast strengthened me." So then, there is no one rule of God's dealings, nor is it safe to lay down, as some have done, that persons must know the day and hour of their conversion. This were to prescribe to God to bring back all, whom He does bring back, in the same way. Yet what they say is so far true of most, that if they are not conscious of having been turned to God, more or less gradually and deeply, they have need to be converted still.

To consider then the circumstances of St. Paul's conversion as an outline of our own.

"He fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him." It is, accordingly, mostly amid terror and amazement that men are restored to God. God has impressed a law on the natural world also, that healthful cure can, for the most part, only take place through bitterness and suffering. The cures of our bodies picture to us the cures of our souls. The progress may be more or less painful; but bitterness is mixed in all. Those, who have felt it, say that the restoration of suspended life is far more suffering than apparent death. Restored circulation has pain; every touch of our body, whereby health is given back, has pain; well-nigh every healing medicine is bitter or revolting to our taste. By this universal law, God would reconcile us to those merciful bitteresses, whereby He corrects our vitiated love for the destructive sweetnesss of this world, and cures our sickly tastes and appetites, teaching us to find no sweetness but in Him.

So He prepares us beforehand to look to them as healthful, and find therein our health. Yes! sorrow, sickness, suffering, loss, bereavement, bring with them precious hours. The world is withdrawn from us, or we from it; we are bound down to our sick beds, and cannot follow after it; or we have lost it, and cannot regain it; or it is clad in sorrow to us, and appears to us, as it truly in itself is, one void, incapable of satisfying us, because that, which in it, whether in God, or with Him, or without Him, did fill our souls, is gone. We may not wait for these hours to turn to God; but we should watch for them, and treasure them, when they are brought to us. God blinds us like Saul, to the world, that, like Saul's, He may open our eyes to Him. He strikes us down, that He may raise us up. He shuts us out from the world, that being alone, we may, like him, pray, ("behold, he prayeth!") and like him, "know His will, and hear the words of His mouth." Yes! they are precious sacred hours; not simply to be endured or past through, much less to be past in feverish tossings or fretfulness, but rather to be spent in reviewing our past lives, looking what sins God would thus "bring to our remembrance," what is the course in which He has thus suddenly checked us, what He would "have us to do?" We should not be eager to escape sorrow, but only, through sorrow, to escape death. They who are more advanced than we, tell us that God's most precious looks on them were, when His face was in "kind austereness clad." Not one pang would they escape; sweet was their chastisement then; sweet its



memory afterward<sup>b</sup>. And we all, such as we are, have probably found that the most healthful seasons of our lives have been those of our severest suffering. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "Let the Just One smite me," says the Psalmist, "it is loving-kindness<sup>c</sup>;" His wounds are love, tender and loving in proportion to their severity.

But pain of body, and sorrow of heart, have their end; if not sooner, yet in the grave: terror of soul has of necessity no end. Time, if it does no more, reconciles to sorrow, but not to fear. Man can endure the past, because it is past; the present, because it must end: but fear for the future, when the future is eternity, has no end. Yet it was through fear that God brought St. Paul to Himself; "and he trembling and astonished said." Nay so wrapt up in this fear and awe did the Heavenly Voice leave him, that for three days and

"<sup>b</sup> Yet, Lord, in memory's fondest place  
I shrine those seasons sad,  
When, looking up, I saw Thy Face  
In kind austereness clad.

"I would not miss one sigh or tear,  
Heart-pang, or throbbing brow;  
Sweet was the chastisement severe,  
And sweet its memory now.

"Yes! let the fragrant scars abide,  
Grace-tokens in Thy stead,  
Faint shadows of the spear-pierced Side,  
And thorn-encompassed Head."

LYRA APOSTOLICA. No. 23. "Affliction."

<sup>c</sup> Ps. cxli. 5.

three nights he neither ate, nor drank, but prayed. In fear He struck him to the ground; in fear and blindness, though with hope, He raised him. He gave him yet not the full relief until that long vigil was closed, night following day, and day night, for three long days and nights, with one burning thought for the past, that he had been "a persecutor and blasphemer" of Him, Who was his Lord and God, one comfort for the future, that He, Whom he had learned thus late to own as his Lord, had something in store for him to do. And so is it with us. Fear, exceeding fear of Hell is one of the most usual ways in which God brings us back to Himself. It needs not that others have warned us of it. Children may hear of it, as it should seem, when man intends it not to reach them. But God brings it home to their tender consciences. Judgement to come is preached, and they, whom we should least expect, or have least deemed it needful for them, tremble. But God "seeth not as man sees;" "the wind bloweth where it listeth;" the Spirit descendeth as "a Spirit of burning," where He wills. He checks the waywardness of early childhood and boyhood, as well as recalls the wanderings of elder years, by fear of Hell. Those around know not, or learn, as it seems, by accident, what is working within. But day after day He brings before them the fear of Judgement, and whether in that Judgement they shall stand or fall. He brings before them endless misery, years after years still the same, so that they wish they had never been born. Others of elder years, night after night, He has terrified

with the visions of Hell, so that they have feared to lie down to sleep for its exceeding terror. Others He has kept waking day and night, with Hell ever plain before their eyes, as any object of sense to us, giving them, as it seems, unearthly strength to endure unearthly suffering. Others He has kept, year after year, upright, performing their duty to Him and to man, but hopeless of their salvation. He has written it on the wall, in the midst of gaiety and dissipation, as in Belshazzar's feast, so that the memory of that fearful hour should live on in the soul for ever for ever<sup>d</sup>. He has traced it on the pages of a book, so that it took the place of all other words, brought hidden sins to light, and was never forgotten<sup>e</sup>. And in less extreme cases, He, by some loss, or sudden stunning blow, brings before men all their sins in one fearful array, sins which they had forgotten, or which they had persuaded themselves were not sins, so that they ask, "Can such as I be saved?" and they wander about "trembling and astonished," in doubt of their lives, craving only to be other than they are, but not knowing how, and bewildered as to past and future, in darkness, with one feeble gleam of hope, that God Who hast touched them, will restore them; or He plants the terrors deeper

<sup>d</sup> All the above are facts known to the writer.

<sup>e</sup> "The ghostly word, full plainly seen,  
Did never from his lips depart :  
But he hath said—  
It brought full many a sin to light  
Out of the bottom of his heart."

than human comfort, so that, when man would minister to or allay them, he cannot. In so many and more solemn ways does He show how terrible a thing sin is; how "fearful" it is "to fall into the hands of the living God;" that persons must, in this life, often be "saved as by fire," "saved with fear," by those who minister to them "pulling them out of the fire:" "saved as by fire," burning out their sin, that they themselves perish not in the fire everlasting. So awefully does He, by His immediate dealings, show the use which He makes of strong mental suffering, and warn us to treat tenderly, but reverently, those whose consciences He is visiting, and melting their dross with His terrors.

The Gospel *is* good tidings of peace, but to those God has kept in the narrow path, or has humbled, or amid suffering, not to supersede it. Repentance, without faith and love, were the remorse of Judas, or of devils; faith and love without repentance, were the portion of innocence which never fell; for fallen and recovering sinners both are mingled together. Faith and repentance are to continue with us to the end. "I will sing," saith the Psalmist, "of mercy and judgement; unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing<sup>f</sup>." Mercy and judgement, terror and loving kindness, severity and tenderness, wounding and healing, slaying and making alive, slaying us to ourselves, that we may live to God, make up the Gospel. The great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; the earthquake shook; the fire

<sup>f</sup> Ps. ci. 1.



consumed, ere the still small voice came. The hills of man's pride were to be made low, his rough ways softened and broken down, his crooked ways made straight by the preaching of repentance, to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Fear and love make up a sinner's feeling to Him Who is a merciful Redeemer, and a Righteous Judge. And since our love is not perfected in this life, or only at its very close,—else should we have no sin, if we wholly loved,—a loving fear or a fearing love is our highest portion, unless, at the end, He take away our fear by His own assurance of His Love.

To "cease to do evil," and "learn to do well," is the whole of repentance, but such repentance is not learned without sorrow, sorrow, heart-searching in proportion to the sin. "God," it has been said<sup>s</sup>, "willeth to save sinners but He willeth to save them as sinners. If He saved them by a simple change of heart, without any repentance for their past life, He would save them as innocent. He wills that they should feel 'that it is an evil thing and bitter to have forsaken the Lord thy God.' He wills that they should enter into His Justice, and that, as He hates and punishes sin, they should hate and punish it in themselves." God Himself, in His miraculous conversion of His chosen vessel St. Paul, kept him three days and three nights without relief. During that long space of fixed sorrow and humiliation, intenser than we have ever felt, He allowed not his mind to be ministered to by

<sup>s</sup> Nicole, *Essais de Morale*, t. ix. p. 122, sur l' *Evangile du iv Dimanche de l'Avent*.

man. How much more may we be content to bear sorrow and fear, who, wherein we have sinned, have sinned against the light, not of the law only, but of the Gospel; not against the light shining around us, but against the light, lightened within us; not against a revelation made without us, but grieving the good Spirit of God placed within us. If we so wasted not only the temple of God without us, (although that also, by our ill example, by joining in, or, if any have so done, occasioning sin in others,) but defiling that within us; not amid weakness, but neglecting the strength, in Baptism imparted to us; not in ignorance, but against knowledge; well may we be content to "sit alone and keep silence, and put our mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope<sup>h</sup>!"

Sorrow then and aching of heart, brought upon us by God, are mostly the means by which God brings back His prodigal children; sorrow or fear without us, to grow by His grace into a godly fear and dread within us. We cannot make ourselves fear; we are not to work up ourselves, as though we could; we cannot hate our sin of ourselves; our sorrow and hatred of it He will give us, if we lie where He has placed us. He will give a deeper hatred, as we, profiting by His grace, are more removed from it, become more unlike it, and more like Him.

And as we cannot make ourselves sorrow, so we should beware how of ourselves we cease to sorrow, or use the promises of the Gospel to heal our pain rather than our sickness. St. Paul lay there where

<sup>h</sup> Lam. iii. 28, 29.



he was stricken, until God said to him, "Arise." Nay strange as it seems, though his sins were wholly blotted out in Baptism, and he was made a new creature, he yet retained the sorrow and humiliation for them. "To me, who am less than the least of all saints, because I persecuted the Church of God, was this grace given." Repentance has less of fear, as it works its fruit and we become other men; yet it must continue still. We are, all we have been. Corruption has not yet put on incorruption. We still bear about us the scars, and lines, and weaknesses, and defilements of our former sins; they leave their traces on our countenances, much more on our hearts. We must appear before our Judge, "to receive the things done in the body whether good or bad." Our very hope that He will by His precious Blood blot them out then, depends upon our washing them with our tears now. We must never think to have done with them, until He have ratified in His Own Person the absolving sentence which He pronounces over us through His Church, and says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Till then, our prayer must be, "wash me thoroughly from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin;" "Lord if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean;" in longing hope of those precious words, "I will, be thou clean." We must never in this life think we have done with our sins, if we would not have them appear against us. If they burst not forth and consume us, as we deserve, it is only because God's mercy, for His Son's sake, permits contrition to quench the flames of Hell. It is a fearful thing to see how people,

on an imagined conversion, contrive to forget what they have been, or remember it only to thank God that they are not now such. It may be awful to ourselves to think, how often we ourselves forget what we have been, and therewith, forget also our penitence; how our elastic spirits buoy us up, and we forget, amid the duties or distractions of this life, our place in the dust, or to demean ourselves as those who should be there.

Yet the sorrow is not to end in itself. St. Paul had to arise and do God's bidding; and we must arise, and with him ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" With him too we must do it; keeping back nothing when we ask, and shrinking from nothing which is laid upon us. Such was St. Paul's conversion. He freely offered up all, and took all. All he had been, he gave up; what he was not, he, in God's hand, became. He was a ravening wolf, he became a lamb; the persecutor, he became persecuted; he who "persecuted from city to city," from city to city bore the tidings of the Gospel; he who "shut up the saints in prison," himself became "the prisoner of Jesus Christ;" yea, all they "heard" of him was this "only, that he who persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed;" he who "beat in every synagogue them who believed in Christ," was "in stripes above measure;" he who stood by, when "the blood of" the Lord's "martyr Stephen was shed," himself shed his blood for the brethren. So was he in all things, and that exceedingly, transformed into the opposite of what he was before.

And this is the most hopeful sign of a real healthful change wrought in us, when we become in life other than we were before; if we, like him, become blinded to the world, and see only in the world Him, Who was crucified for us, and "with Him" are ourselves "crucified to the world;" if for ambitious, we become lowly; for proud, humble; for angry, meek; for impatient, patient; for self-indulgent, self-denying; for covetous, liberal. Zeal even for our Lord is not so happy a sign of our being indeed His, as the conquest of evil habits, besetting sins, dispositions which were ingrained in us. Then may we indeed hope that He will blot out our sins, when we feel His gracious touch, slowly it may be, but gradually, unloosening their hold upon us. Then may we hope that He will trace again in us His Holy Likeness, wherein we were re-created, when we feel His Spirit, not only "lifting up our minds to high and heavenly things," but "mortifying the works of the flesh and our earthly members<sup>1</sup>." We have not to look that the work be accomplished in us. This we dare not hope in life. Enough if our chains fall off altogether with this our sinful flesh wherewith we sinned. Our hope is in Him Who gives us perseverance, to yield all our members, one by one, to righteousness, as, before, too many to unrighteousness; not to keep back any right hand or right foot, which causeth us to offend, but contrariwise to seek, like little children, to be "led by the hand," whither He would have us go.

Nor, again, are we to hope to have all our way

<sup>1</sup> Art. xvii.

plain before us, or to see His face equally clearly, as when He first by His merciful severity checked our wayward course, and recalled us to ourselves and to Him. By merciful interpositions, if we heed them, He sets us, from time to time, in a right course, but then He leaves us to the ordinary channels of His grace, and the guidance, which He has provided in His Church. Even to St. Paul He declared not at once, all He had in store for him. He let him know only Who Himself was, and then let him be guided in an ordinary way to His Church, filling him with the Holy Ghost through the Sacrament of Baptism. His further purposes He yet kept back. "I *will* show him," He saith, "how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake." Even to him He gradually revealed Himself, in visions in the temple, when he was caught up into the third heaven, when He bade him go to the Gentiles, or told him that he must bear witness for Him at Rome. Meantime He was less visibly present with him, leaving him to obey that first call, and proving what was in his heart, whether he would fully obey or no. And even after He had received him as His own, and given him his commission to preach the Gospel, He seems to have led him at this time into Arabia, there, in three years' solitude and silent waiting upon Himself, tempering his zeal into patience and obedience, and moulding "this chosen vessel to bear His Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and people of Israel."

So should it be with us. Humility, retirement, obedience, fear, are the best accompaniments of



penitence; first, to school and discipline self, and then await His further guidance, under the shadow of His Church, what further task He has in store for us. It is sad in how many ways men out-run or fall short of these gracious calls, through self-willed activity or sloth. One sort hears them, starts, feels to the quick, is content with having felt, and there remains. Others mistake the stirrings within them for calls to act on other sinners, their own restlessness for God's summons to be doing. And so souls, being scarce reformed themselves, set themselves, as it may be, to reform the Church; they blame her, because they themselves failed to profit by her ministry, or, instead of edifying the Church by the silent witness of their renewed lives, divide it by taking upon themselves a ministry to which they were not called, in some new or old schism.

It is a great grace if, after having neglected, much more if, after having profaned our baptismal privileges, God calls us anew, and awakens us to our condition. It seems, from men's manifold failures, a yet rarer grace, so to profit by this His first grace as He meant it. Satan, if he cannot altogether withhold us, besets us on every side and at every period, and would hold us back or turn us out of the way; he would use even the very energy which God infuses, to hurry us beyond the bounds prescribed by God; he would make us contemplate that energy, and rest therein, instead of pressing onward in it; he would set us on tasks too difficult for our new-born strength, in order to weary us of any task; he would deter us from setting about

any, for fear we should not be able to persevere, and so should disgrace our profession; he would make us trust in our own strength, or mistrust God's; he would substitute a more subtle temptation for those whereby we fell, or draw us insensibly back into the old snares; he would use, whatever our temper be, our security or our timidity, our energy or our listlessness. Sternness and fixedness of purpose he would corrupt into pride of heart; softness into undue yielding; our very thankfulness to God into forgetfulness what He "has" yet "for us to do" in our own souls. Unhappily rare as are even seeming conversions, one must fear lest abiding conversions, which continue to the end, are far rarer; and that too many who "endure" not merely "for a while," still yield but a blighted and withered harvest.

All have need of all patience, prayer, watchfulness, self-examination, self-discipline. But if *they* need it, whose house is whole, how much more such as most of us, who have "allowed" our's "to be broken through;" if they, whose armour is bright, and who have been "men of war from their youth," how much more they who have but lately put it on! No! step by step, in penitent humility must our way be, if we would not miss it, and our endless rest.

My brethren, though we may deceive ourselves every way, and so in this also, I would hope your attendance here on this holy day, while the world is pursuing its round of listlessness and forgetfulness, implies that you have been either kept in the narrow way, or have been brought back into it,



or are earnestly seeking by penitence to re-enter it, or to persevere in it. Yet though there may to many be one marked turning-point in life, from which they began to live more steadfastly to God, yet is not our task therewith ended; rather it began therewith. Unless we sorely grieve God's Holy Spirit, He gives us mostly many calls. We hear them more or less distinctly, according as we obeyed the first or no. They come in various forms; by voices within us or without; in sermons, or some Scripture text which God brings home to us; by the warnings of friends, the reproofs of elders, the taunts of equals; by the example of the good, or some shock from the sins of the bad; the chance reproach which we know better than they who used it how well we deserve, or praise, which we know too well we do not deserve; by change of outward circumstances, which break through our course of life, and set us, as it were, to start afresh; by removal from old associates, or giving of new friends, or by unwonted solitude; by terror of death in ourselves, or the sudden death of those like ourselves, or by unlooked-for deliverance; by fears of hell or hopes of heaven; by some guidance, which leads us to observe more some ordinance of the Church or increase self-discipline; by our Confirmation, our first Communion, or opportunity of more frequent Communion: sometimes by joy and success, more often by sickness, and weariness, and sorrow, and failure, and disappointment; sometimes by putting us upon doing some single act of duty, sometimes by shewing us the character of some single sin; by some general secret stirring of our hearts to

what is good; by joy in some accomplished duty, or in trial surmounted, or by humiliation and remorse at our defeat; by indistinct misgivings, or plainer forebodings of the tendency of something wrong in us; by opportunity of practising more largely some grace which He has kept alive in us (as kindness or almsgiving), or of getting the better, in some more signal instance, of our natural inclinations or a besetting sin; by some chance word, as it seems, recalling to us happier and purer days, reminding us what we once were, or showing us what we are; by some gradual quickening, bearing us onward silently we know not how or whither, or by striking us to the earth, with St. Paul, by some stunning bewildering blow; by such as these, and ten thousand other ways, suited to our various characters, God, for the most part, again and again, calls us onward and sets us in some new way. And we shall, too likely, be amazed and confounded, when we know how many such calls we have had and have disregarded. We need not, as some unhappily do, wait for them. We are encompassed by them, if we would take heed to them. We need but faithful, watchful hearts to take heed to them and detain them, that they leave us not without a blessing. Our Lord meets us in the way in another and another form; and if we listen to His Voice, "our hearts" will "burn within us," and "our eyes" will be no longer "holden," and though He "vanish from our sight," it will not be without some token of His Presence. None can bear witness to us of these His visits here, but our own consciences. They are mostly God's hidden words

to ourselves; plain to us, if we have ears to hear, but not heard by others, for whom they are not meant. The world around mostly hears not of it. They see not the star which shines to us, and by shining bids us follow. They "hear," at most, "the sound of the voice<sup>k</sup>," but not the words; or they "see the light<sup>l</sup>," but not Him Whom the light shrouded. When they see the outward circumstances of pain or grief, they know not what they are to us, and mostly underrate them, and would be surprised at the effect which they wrought in us. Well is it for us, if we be so placed that they hinder it not, or God give us strength not to heed their hindrances; if when they, like Festus, account us "mad" for our change of life, God gives us firmness to answer, that ours are the "words," and the choice of "truth and soberness!" But the voice is or may be distinct for us; and we must hear it once again, in thankfulness or in terror, at the Judgement Day.

We must hear Wisdom crying to us now, "Turn ye at My reproof; behold I will pour out My Spirit unto you; I will make known My words unto you;" or we must hear Her then in that awful hour, "laughing at our calamity, and mocking when our fear cometh." We have all much need to hearken. Enough that it is our compassionate Saviour's voice calling to us invisibly from heaven. He sets us in some new way, not that we should loiter or stand still in it, but that we should walk and grow in it. If He humble us, it is that we seek out fresh acts of humility; if He stir us in one case to self-

<sup>k</sup> Acts ix. 7.

<sup>l</sup> Ib. xxii. 9.

denying almsgiving, that we seek out fresh occasions, by simplifying our habits and expenses; if at one time He puts into our hearts penitential thoughts, that we labour to make our life one penitence, all our actions "meet for repentance." The first acts which He puts within us to do, are not the ripened fruit, but the blossom, which by perseverance is to be matured; they are an earnest and sample of what He would have done by us, not its perfecting; a rude essay, to be wrought out when we are less unformed, and acceptable as wrought in Him, and a token of our will to serve Him; it is saying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" not "a finishing of the course," or having "fought the good fight;" it is a hopeful childhood of our faith, not its seasoned manhood.

Even the best of us, such as we now are, have too much of the world, in some form or other, clinging to us; we have all too much need ever to strike into some new way, to amend our doings, increase our contrition for the past, our watchfulness for the future. God is continually bestowing on us new love, new mercy, new forgiveness, new quickening grace; and by these gracious gifts is asking of us new returns and degrees of love, new repentance, new life. If He seem to call us not, we have the more need to pray Him to unseal our dull ear, that we may hear His call, or even by some sore affliction call more loudly to us, that even "dead" as we are, we may "hear His Voice, and" hearing "live." As year by year rolls round, these gracious calls are either being exhausted, if we regard them not, or they are preparing for that



last blissful call, when, in the hour of death, He shall call nearest to His side those who obeyed His earliest calls, yet will not shut out us, who, if we at first neglected or refused to work in our Father's vineyard, afterwards "repented and went;" —that blissful call, which it may be, with the memory of so many neglected calls, we shall scarce believe will belong to us; but to us also shall it be said, "Arise, be of good comfort, He calleth thee;" to us also He shall say at the awful day, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

May He give us all grace so to "hear His Voice and follow Him" now, that our past neglect of His many calls and recalls, turn not to our condemnation, and "in the hour of death and Day of Judgement" may He "deliver us."

## SERMON III.

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### THE CROSS BORNE FOR US, AND IN US.

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PHIL. iii. 8—11.

*“ Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know Him and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”*

THE Cross of Christ is now preached every where. We exult to say that our salvation is through Him alone, our righteousness from Him, that “there is no other Name under Heaven whereby men may be saved.” So far is well: the right foundation has been laid; but the foundation is not the building. What then has been built thereon? We



believe that our righteousness is in Christ. Are we seeking to have His Righteousness in us? We look to the Cross of Christ for refuge. Are we, who believe in it, bearing it? Are we "taking up our Cross and following Him?" These are earnest questions. For much knowledge and little practice; much light and little heat; many leaves and slender fruit; much "drinking in of the rain that cometh oft upon us<sup>a</sup>," and scanty produce; these things suit not together. Of such God saith, "It is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose *end is to be burned*<sup>b</sup>." "The *knowledge* of the Lord may cover the earth as the waters cover the sea," yet the earth be as barren as the seashore. The pale cold light of the moon, which enlightens but warms not, putrifies what it falls upon. An especial judgement is throughout Scripture denounced on those who have much knowledge, but little love and cold deeds. The judgement of Sodom "set forth," as it is, "for an ensample, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" shall be "more tolerable" than that of Capernaum; that of Tyre and Sidon, of which not a trace remains, more tolerable than Bethsaida. God give us, who have the wealth of Tyre, and the knowledge of Capernaum, grace in this our day to lay it to heart!

Our Church every where remarkably brings together faith and obedience; following herein her Lord, Who gives us no other rule whereby to judge of our state, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if do them." Nor is it less remarkable how

<sup>a</sup> Heb. vi. 7.

<sup>b</sup> ver. 8.

St. Paul, in this and other passages, while setting forth the free grace of the Gospel, insists on the self-denial, and sacrifices, and suffering of the Gospel,—or how we are wont to separate what God by him has joined, and dwell on them as a heart-uplifting description of what God has done for us, and forget what these same Scriptures speak of, what is to be done in us and by us. Most consciences probably would bear witness that they had often read and exulted in this passage, in its rejection of “the righteousness which is of the law,” and its fervid description of faith in Christ, without so much as a thought that it implied or required any sacrifice of *self*; much less with any serious thought of practising or increasing self-denial in compliance with it. It seems to us a great thing to hold nothing as of any account but Christ, to “count all things but loss that we may win Him,” to cast away all dependence on ourselves and our own works, for the righteousness which is by faith in Him. These are kindling glorious truths; but they do not stand alone in St. Paul, nor may they in us. St. Paul speaks not only “of *counting* all things but loss,” (so a man might do and yet deceive himself,) but he adds, “for Whom also I *have suffered* the loss of all things.” He speaks not only of the righteousness which for Christ’s sake had been through Baptism imparted to him, but also of the righteousness which had been infused and inworked *in* him, the “power of the Resurrection of Christ” in raising him, the sharing of *His* sufferings, the being likened and fashioned to *His* death. His was not merely re-

nunciation of self-righteousness; it was renunciation of self. It was not a listless, costless confession of the worthlessness of works which oftentimes are none; it was the abandonment of all the merits of real hard service in the sweat of his brow, and of all which that service had attained, reputation, power, station, esteem, triumph, to be "the offscourings of the world," and to "die daily." St. Paul *had* "the righteousness which is of the law;" he *had* "after the strictest sect of his religion lived a Pharisee." He could appeal to all his persecutors "who had known him from the beginning," who had "known his manner of life from his" very "youth," that he had lived holily and unblameably, according to the holiness of the law. He too had, with the twelve tribes, "served God instantly day and night," longing for "the promise made of God unto the Fathers<sup>c</sup>." He had all the chiefest privileges of his nation, descent from one of the two tribes who dwelt again in the Holy Land; he was circumcised the eighth day, learned in all the learning of the law; he had all the reputation of that sect held most in repute; he was not a "Pharisee" only, but "zealous;" not zealous only, but as "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless<sup>d</sup>." These things "were gains<sup>e</sup>," great gains. He had been entrusted with much, and he had traded with it, and obtained "gains," even "the righteousness which is in the law:" he was in favour with man, and he might think himself in favour with God: yea, he was in favour with God, since what he did well he

<sup>c</sup> Acts xxvi. 4—7.

<sup>d</sup> Phil. iii. 5, 6.

<sup>e</sup> v. 7.

did faithfully; wherein he sinned, he sinned “ignorantly<sup>f</sup>,” and God revealed Himself unto him, and in His Mercy summoned him to renounce all these “gains;” that He, of His free mercy, might give him what was far better—gains, to which these were “loss,”—even Christ. This, we know, St. Paul did promptly, instantly. “Immediately” he conferred not with flesh and blood<sup>g</sup>; he hesitated not; he asked, “Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to do?” and did it. He “*suffered* loss of all things,” all things past and all future; all which he had so many years toiled to gain; all, nothing excepted. For glory, he had shame; for wealth, poverty; for station, to be an outcast; for honour, dishonour; for good report, evil report; for being well-known, to be unknown; for the chiefest highest sect, of all respected, to be of that sect which was “every where spoken against;” all which he had his whole life long toiled to gain, every thing he had valued, prized, sought, loved, he abandoned at one stroke; for Saul the admired Pharisee, he became Saul the despised Galilean. It is difficult for us to realize this trial of his faith. We behold him now, the aged Saint, the Martyr, the Converter of the nations, the inspired deliverer and writer of the Word of God, “the prisoner of Jesus Christ,” whose “race is finished,” who has a “crown laid up” for him, who is even now, through his example, his sufferings, his holiness, the Word of God spoken through his mouth, converting, strengthening, ripening his brethren; him, who even in this life knew of his future judgement

<sup>f</sup> 1 Tim. i. 13.<sup>g</sup> Gal. i. 16.



and his crown. Amid all this accumulated glory, it becomes difficult to think of the time when all this was future, when all had to be won, and Saul the persecutor had, in middle life, to abandon all for which he had hitherto been preparing himself, to begin, as it were, again from the beginning, undo habits long formed, and now part of himself: he who had "sat at the feet of Gamaliel," had to unlearn all which he had learnt, the man of full-developed energy had to come and sit, like a little child, at the feet of Christ, to tame his strength, and to be strong only in suffering. And this too, when the disciples of the Crucified were but a small despised handful, sheep scattered abroad, their Shepherd unseen, Jew and Heathen alike saying, "Where is their God?" Nay, what had before obtained for him repute, this he was henceforth to count sin, and himself,—not in words only, nor echoing words provided for him, but in their very depth—the "chief of sinners."

Such then to St. Paul was the doctrine of the Cross. Well might he set forth himself as an example to his children in the faith, as one who *had counted* "all things but loss that he might win Christ;" for Whom also he "*had suffered* the loss of *all* things." All those long catalogues of his sufferings, the "signs of his Apostleship," which the heretical teachers extorted from him, are so many comments on *his* doctrine of the Cross. The Disciple was as his Master; the Apostle of the Crucified was daily crucified, until the Martyr's sword was the release from his daily martyrdom; and he, having been likened here to his Lord, in his life



and in his death, for His Church, again was joined with Him.

The whole of the Gospel is the doctrine of the Cross, but that two-fold; the Cross borne *for* us, and the virtue and power of the Cross by the Sacraments communicated to us, and henceforth to be borne *by* us. By Baptism we are made members of Him, Who for us was crucified; and our life from Baptism to our death should be a practice of the Cross, a learning to be crucified, a crucifixion of our passions, appetites, desires, wills, until, one by one, they be all nailed, and we have no will, but the will of our Father which is in Heaven: until in the prospect of each lesser cross, such as are allotted to us, not merely when laid upon us, and we cannot escape them, we too can take up our Master's words, "Not my will, but Thine."

These two St. Paul conjoins, and they are inseparable. Of ourselves we could have no will, no power to bear the Cross. We could not "crucify our old man;" this must be and has been done *for* us: but this done, we must, by the strength given us, keep it crucified; we must look well that it strive not, rebel not, break not its bonds, much less ourselves seek to undo them.

These two points, then, we find uniformly in St. Paul's teaching; a past act whereby we were crucified, have died with Christ in Baptism, have therein been buried with Him, and a present state in which we remain crucified, are to remain dead, and are actively employed in crucifying our own desires, in mortifying or putting to death the deeds of the old man.

“God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world *hath been* crucified,” (so it is in the original) “unto me, and I unto the world<sup>h</sup>.” The world had been nailed motionless to the Cross of Christ, and was dead; and he had been nailed to the same Cross, and was also dead; so that the things of the world, being dead, had no more power to tempt him; and he had died to them, and had no more longing for them, than one dead for things that were dead, and were laid bare in their intrinsic deadliness, and nothingness, and corruption. But this Cross had left upon him the marks of suffering. “I bear about,” I bear them as in triumph, “the marks of the Lord Jesus,” the prints of His nails, the sufferings of His Cross.

Again, “I through the law *have died* to the law, that I might live to God;” i. e., the law brought me to Christ, and through Him I *have died* to the law, that I might live unto God? And wherein was this life? He goes on, “I *have been* crucified with Christ (“in Baptism,” says St. Chrysostome) and so having been slain, and made a partaker of Christ, and Christ having given me life, “I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.” Unspeakable words! his life is no longer his natural earthly life, but the life of Christ has been transfused into him, yea Christ Himself lived in him, having united him unto Himself. Blessed spirit! he had remained dead to sin, and alive to righteousness: he had loved Christ, obeyed Him, cleaved to Him wholly, mortified all besides Him, so that

<sup>h</sup> Gal. vi. 14.

henceforth there was within him only a soul which obeyed Christ, and Christ Who governed his soul, so that his life was not himself but Christ living in him<sup>1</sup>. How must he have crucified self, in whom Christ so abode, that his life was the life of Christ within him !

Yet were not this privilege or these duties St. Paul's only : they are the common duties and responsibilities of Christians. "Set your affections on the things above, not on things on the earth," such is the exhortation,—living on earth to live in heaven,—and whence the strength ? "for *ye have died*, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The first earthly man has been slain in you : "has been buried, not," says St. Chrysostome, "in earth," but in water ; not by death destroying it, but by Him Who destroyed death ; it has been buried not by the law of nature, but by a sovereign command mightier than nature." Ye have, by Baptism, been made members of Christ, so that ye and your life are in Him, and since He is with God and is God, then your life, being in Him, is hid in God. The life here below is not your life ; your life is above, not yet revealed what it shall be, hid with Christ in God, and to be revealed at His coming. "When Christ your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Your life and the glories of your life are absorbed within the unapproachable glories of the invisible God. In the very depths of Divinity, in God, in the bosom of the Father, where your Saviour is, is your life hid. "Mortify therefore," the Apostle adds,

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 19, 20.

“your members, which are upon the earth.” Here are again the same two points: on the part of God, our past death unto sin with Christ in Baptism, a death wherein sin was slain in us, and a new life imparted from God Himself; on ours, thus new-created, the putting to death all these things, which would again live and destroy our life, to keep them dead. “Mortify,” i. e., put to death, utterly extinguish “your members, which are upon the earth,” all that is in you savouring of the earth, belonging to the earth, “inordinate affections, evil desires, covetousness, which is idolatry, anger, wrath<sup>k</sup>,” as well as what men account heavier sins.

Again; “knowing this, that our old man *has been crucified* with Him,” (this is past) “that the body of sin might be destroyed,” (this is what is to be accomplished). We have by Baptism (for of Baptism he has been speaking, “whoever of us have been baptized into Christ, were baptized into His death,”) by Baptism we have been made partakers of the Cross, the Death, the Passion, the Burial, the Resurrection of Christ: we have been joined to Christ; His Death and Life are ours, that henceforth “the whole body of sin,” sin in all its members and all the parts of which the old man is composed, may be utterly “destroyed,” that we may no longer “serve sin,” may serve it no more than the “dead, who is freed from sin.” For the life that ye now live, is not your own, but from God and “to God, in Jesus Christ our Lord,” in Whom we His members are<sup>l</sup>.

<sup>k</sup> Col. iii. 2, 5.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. vi. 1, 11.



And so in like cases; “<sup>m</sup>that ye put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and true holiness,” i. e., ye have been recreated after the image of God, see that ye clothe yourselves with it more and more closely, bind it nearer to you. “We preach Christ crucified, Christ, to them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God<sup>n</sup>;” power whereby men conquer Satan, flesh vanquishes evil spirits, weakness tramples on the powers of darkness, and, as one of old times said of Christians, “men become like the angels and lead angel lives.”

The conclusion of the whole then is this; we are not simply bid to die to sin, to crucify our old man, to abolish the whole body of sin; nor again are we simply told that Christ died for our sins, was crucified for our sins, “blotted them out, nailing them to His Cross.” We are told both; first of His dying for us, and through our adoption into His Body, by His Sacrament, imparting to us the efficacy of that Death, yea that Death itself, and then of our remaining dead, crucified, motionless, stirring neither hand nor foot towards those sins, whose curse He bore for us, and which He once slew in us.

And now we may go back the reader to the teaching of the text, and the neighbouring verses. St. Paul rejects not any righteousness of a Christian; he teaches us not to lay this aside, but all, whether of the Jew or Heathen, all whether of the Jewish or moral law, all which is *out of* Christ. A Christian has no righteousness but *of* Christ.

<sup>m</sup> Eph. iv. 25.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.



How should he, since by Baptism he is *in* Christ and Christ in him; as they spake in old times, he “beareth God?” “By grace we are saved through faith, and that” (not even faith) “not of yourselves; it” (even your faith) “is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast; for we are His workmanship, *having been* new-created *in* Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before appointed that we should walk in them<sup>o</sup>.” It was not of yourselves, that ye were brought to Christ; not of yourselves, that ye do good works; “for he who hath received, how should he glory as though he had not received?” We ourselves, and any thing that may be good in us, are “the workmanship,” the making, of Christ. How should we have anything of our own? Yet neither may we disparage the works done in us; in *us*, did I say? I mean not in this weak and self-indulgent generation, who come not up to the measure of their fathers, but of the blessed saints and martyrs of old time, who “through faith wrought righteousness<sup>p</sup>.”

St. Paul abandoned that righteousness which he had out of Christ, for that higher righteousness which he might have “*of* God through faith,” derived *of* God and *in* him. And this righteousness was, that he might “know Christ,” and feel within himself the power of the “resurrection of his Lord,” (rising himself with his risen Lord, and whither his Lord was) “and the sharing of His sufferings, and the likeness of His Death,” so that he who had before been by Baptism buried into *the*

<sup>o</sup> Eph. ii. 8—10.

<sup>p</sup> Heb. xi. 33.

*likeness* of His Death<sup>q</sup>, now was made like to that Death itself, dying now in the body, as before to sin. So that from this likeness to his Lord, and being in his Lord, “he filled up in his flesh that which remained behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body, which is the Church<sup>r</sup>.” His Lord suffered in him, as before in those whom he had persecuted. He bequeathed, as it were, this treasure to His faithful servants, that they should suffer for His body. Although His sufferings alone were meritorious, and all other sufferings were through Him and His power, yet He exhausted not the whole sufferings which were to be borne, that man might have the privilege of being like his Lord, in suffering for that body for which He had suffered. As he says again, “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus<sup>s</sup>”, i. e., day by day dying after His death and for His Church; or as he says, “always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in us,” i. e., that it may be seen that He is indeed our life, since amid daily death, through Him we still live.

The ancient Christians followed this example. They shared each other’s sufferings; they suffered one for another; the rich shared the poverty of the poor. They saw Christ in the poor, the prisoners, the captives, the sick, as He bade them, and as He had told them, and underwent sufferings for them. They “laid down their lives for the brethren.”

So then they well understood the two parts of the

<sup>q</sup> Rom. vi. 5.

<sup>r</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>s</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11.

doctrine of the Cross; the Cross which was borne *for* us by Christ, and the Cross which was to be borne *by* us, in Christ's strength and for Christ's sake: and this not for a brighter crown only, but that they might be finally saved; "if *by any* means," St. Paul adds, "I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead, not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected." He felt within him "the power of the Resurrection," he "shared his Saviour's sufferings," that he might share his Saviour's life, and yet he counted himself not as yet certain of it; "if by any means I might attain." And if he, the Apostle, the chosen vessel of God, the sharer of the Cross, the filler-up of the sufferings of Christ, if he were not yet certain, where and in what condition are we?

Men and brethren, soldiers, servants, ensign-bearers of Christ, what are we doing? We too were baptized into our Saviour's Death, our Saviour's Cross; we too bear upon our brows the imprinted Cross, unseen of men, but seen of angels, seen of Satan, the "seal of God upon our foreheads," which whoso "keepeth, that wicked one toucheth him not." But was it placed there an idle sign? Had it no meaning? Was the sign of the Cross to be worn in the midst of luxury and ease? Were the 'sworn soldiers of the Cross' to live softly? Our Lord too, Who bore the Cross for us, preached the Cross. Hear Him! "He that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me<sup>t</sup>." "Then said He to His disciples," (not to the multitude, but to the disciples who *had* "left all to follow

<sup>t</sup> S. Matt. x. 38.

Him") "if any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross *daily*<sup>u</sup>, and follow Me<sup>v</sup>." "Whosoever doth not bear his Cross and come after Me, *cannot* be My disciple<sup>w</sup>." "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the Cross and follow Me<sup>x</sup>." Are there other terms of being Christ's *true* disciples now and then? (for some of these heavy sayings were meant to deter people from the great peril of being *false* disciples.) Are there other terms of being worthy of Christ now and then? Other ways of following Him? Has He repealed His "*cannot* be My disciple?" Can those who would have been *unworthy* then, be "worthy" now? Have 1800 years made a difference in Him Who "changeth not?" Or has He died again, to "open the kingdom of Heaven" to those whom He has called unworthy of Him? Oh then what madness and extreme misery, that men will think to be saved in any other way than He Who is "the Way," has pointed out!

He Who bare the Cross, Who knew what the Cross was, to Whom the Cross was what it could be to none besides, He Who would bear the Cross in us, and make our cross, as well as His, a joy to us, as it was to St. Paul, making us to "joy in tribulations," because they make us so far like Him,—He, Who knows whereof we are made, our utter weakness as well as His own strength, "mighty to save," still calls aloud to those who will hear, "If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself and take

<sup>u</sup> S. Luke ix. 23.<sup>v</sup> S. Matt. xvi. 24, S. Mark viii. 34.<sup>w</sup> S. Luke xiv. 27.<sup>x</sup> S. Mark x. 21.



up his Cross *daily*, and follow Me;" and "where I am, there shall he be also."

It threatens to be the curse and the sin and condemnation of this our people, that we have the Cross of Christ much in our mouths, but little in our hearts; we talk well about it, profess thankfulness for it, are glad to rely upon it, but touch it not with one of our fingers. We have awakened, in part only, from the listlessness of the last century. God, by His tremendous judgements on a neighbouring nation<sup>v</sup>, that tremendous judgement of leaving them to walk in their own ways, in some measure scared us from our carelessness. But although we have been in some degree awakened, we are not restored; we have become alive to some duties, and some portion of our privileges, and more to our privileges than to our duties. Satan no longer hinders the preaching of the Cross; he would no longer make it a shame and a reproach; he would do what is far worse, he would make it popular; he would persuade men that they had it and held it, while he substitutes a counterfeit for it, dissuades us from making it ours, tells us at one time of its impossibility, at another of its hardness, at another of our weakness and inability to hold on under it; and so that when we ceased, we should lose both our labour and reward, and vex ourselves to no purpose; at another he would confound it in our mind with some abuse, and treat as excitement, or folly, or superstition, yea as opposed to the doctrine of the

<sup>v</sup> They, who knew those whose manhood or matured age witnessed the first French Revolution, know from recent memories, how it awoke people like a thunder-clap.



Cross, the habitual bearing of the Cross, as they of old time bare it. He says to our souls, "soul, take thine ease," "since God hath with His Son freely given thee all things." Whatever approaches to austerity, self-chastisement, "bearing hardness," he would decrie as self-righteousness or the deeds of the law; an increase of more frequent, regular, and, as being a rule, more self-denying devotion, he would denounce as fanaticism; he would substitute a costless egotistical activity about the concerns of others for renunciation and discipline of self; and as he once taught the Church of Israel in a savage age to sacrifice their sons and their daughters to devils, so he would persuade our easy, indolent, sensitive age, that its luxuriant feelings, its delight in the title of the Cross, its costless gifts out of its abundance, are the true and right and acceptable service. And so he would tell us that the bearing of the Cross is flatly against the doctrine of the Cross, that it is to dishonour or to supersede it; that the way which our Lord called strait and narrow is easy and broad. Hence, while the doctrine of the Cross has been continually more preached, the practice of the Cross has continually more diminished; our luxuries and comforts have confessedly increased; luxury spreads downwards and around; every class, save the poor, is in possession of luxuries which their fathers had not; every one is conscious of it in some degree, and all have more of which they are not conscious: all admit the fact, almost all probably have at times misgivings about it; and yet none hold their hand, or return to the simplicity of their forefathers; nay, the

evil continually deepens; and people philosophise upon it, and look upon it as a sort of necessity, and at last perhaps justify it, and then boast, that as a nation we 'understand our comforts,' a boast which shows that we are no nation of the Cross, we are, 'as a nation,' no disciples of the Crucified.

Would St. Paul own *us* as disciples of the Cross, or rather would not his "spirit burn within him," at sight of so great a nation wholly given to that worst idolatry—idolatry of self? But whom the disciple would not own, how may we dare to hope the righteous Judge will own at the Great Day?

I speak not only of that which takes to itself the title of condemnation, and calls itself "the world," but of Christians: and I would have you one by one, ask yourselves, wherein do I take up the Cross daily?

Would any know how to begin bearing the Cross? Some crosses God from our very childhood has in His goodness provided for us, that in them we may learn what of ourselves we should have had no courage to begin. We speak of the "crosses" of daily life, and forget that our very language is a witness against us, how meekly we ought to bear them, in the blessed steps of our Holy Lord; how in 'every cross and care,' we ought not to acquiesce simply, but to take them cheerfully, not cheerfully only but joyfully: yea if they should even deserve the name of tribulation, to "joy in tribulation" also, as seeing in them our Father's hand, our Saviour's Cross. *These* meet us most often in our earliest years, since then we are most subject to the wills of others; and to those, who

are yet young, every contradiction of their will, whether from elders or from the rudenesses of those of their own age, every little ailment, every petty disappointment, will, if they take it cheerfully, become a blessing; it is a touch of their Saviour's Cross; and so, though painful at the moment, is sweet and healthful afterwards. So walking on earth we may be in heaven; the ill tempers of others, the slights and rudenesses of the world, ill health, the daily accidents with which God has mercifully strewed our paths, instead of ruffling or disturbing our peace, may cause the peace of God to be "shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost Which is given us."

As our years and our sins for the most part increase, these involuntary crosses also deepen; the stream becomes darker as it rolls downwards; and as our sins grow heavier, so, if in His mercy He abandon us not, doth His rod. Yet even sorrow and affliction, sent as the punishment of our sins, have their privileges. If borne humbly and penitently, to us also as to the penitent thief upon the cross, they may be the entrance into Paradise. If we also, when outstretched upon our deserved cross, abide, as he did, patiently upon it, confessing, "and we indeed justly," with him we may see by our side the Saviour Who for us died upon the Cross; with him we may hear Him at the last say, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." When sorrow and the cross come upon thee, seek not, with the world, to distract it; drive it not away with fresh sources of sorrow, but bid it welcome; cherish it as a heavenly visitant, as a messenger

sent from God with healing to thy soul; and thou shalt find that thou "entertainest Angels unawares." Thou shalt find the bow in the cloud, His light arising out of darkness, His Form upon the troubled waters; and if He hush them not, He shall say unto thy soul, "Fear not, for I am with thee;" He shall make it gladlier to thee to lie low in trouble and anguish, while He is with thee, than ever any joys of this world were, while He was less present with thee, or wherein thou forgottest Him. The blessed lot is not to live joyously in the world, undisturbed by sorrow or suffering, having our "good things in this life," left (God forbid!) to our own ways. It is rather to have our "evil things" here, that we may by God's mercy escape them hereafter; it is to lie low—well is it for us, if it be of our own accord, yet any how to lie low—under His Cross. Though for the time it lie heavy upon us, it is not so heavy as sin; though it wounds us, they are "the wounds of a Friend;" though its nails pierce us, though it bow us to the earth, it places us not so deep as we deserve to be; it casts us down only, that when we have learnt to lie there, in silence and humiliation, He may raise us up. Does this appear to any a hard lot? What are any present sufferings to man's desert? what any sorrow of man's to His Who bore our sorrows? what the most grievous pains during the longest life? They are but as our life, "a breath which appeareth but for a little while and then vanisheth away." They must, any how, be short, since our life here is short also. They are short, are as nothing, if they be but the means whereby God



would deliver us from the wrath to come, would chasten us for a little while, that He may not deliver us unto death eternal.

Does any yet shrink from having the Cross thus laid upon him? Well may they, so they be content to bear it even thus, should God think fit to lay it on them! But if you would not have the Cross thus laid upon you, or (which were alone really to be feared) lose the Cross and its saving efficacy, take it betimes upon thyself. Even men, who knew not the Gospel, have felt by an implanted instinct that there is no excellence without self-denial. Christian excellence there is none without bearing the Cross of Christ. The truth has passed even into a Christian proverb, "No Cross, no crown." Every shade of self-denial, from the pettiest denial of our appetites to the Martyr's mangled and scarce-human form, are all included in "bearing the Cross:" the least, because He has commanded it, and He, for His own love's sake which He has given, accepts it; the greatest, still for no other reason. The Martyr's Baptism of blood, the child's infantine practice in saying "no" unto itself, the penitent's austerity in chastening and subduing the flesh which had rebelled and betrayed him into sin, the widow's two mites, the Disciples selling their lands or houses and bringing the prices to the Apostles' feet, the Missionary's self-devotion, the vigil by the sick bed, the nursing of a poor neighbour freely, the consecration of a life to acts of mercy, Paul's solitary lot, every wish and breathing of the heart cheerfully resigned to Him—are all in their several degrees acceptable in one and the same



way, in that they are crosses, sanctified through the Cross of our Lord, sacrifices acceptable through His Sacrifice, and in dutiful grateful obedience to His Will. All are preparations for Heaven. For though we know not its unspeakable joys, or where-in they consist, this we know, that we must learn to do His will on earth as it is in Heaven, to be like the blessed Spirits who do His pleasure, swift and instant as the lightning; to count nothing labour, toil, or cross, which is to do His will. This portion of the Cross has a blessed privilege, in that it is *taken* willingly in obedience, not simply *borne* willingly, as the chastisement of disobedience: it is taken, in order, in what little way regenerate man is capable of, to become like his Master; it is taken out of love to Him, and to do His commandments. As a general rule, (1) think nothing too little; seek for the Cross in the daily incidents of life; look for the Cross in every thing. Nothing is little which relates to man's salvation; nor is there any thing too little, in which either to please God, or to serve Satan. Therefore it is that the Cross so often meets our eyes in common things, yea, that it is the commonest form in art and nature; it is impressed every where, from the courses of the heavenly bodies to some of the stones upon your shore<sup>z</sup>, or the flowers of the field; it is presented to us by the very birds as they soar heavenwards; "the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea" float, as it were, upheld by it; the despised animal, which bare our Lord, bears on its shoulders the memorial of His Cross; the hu-

<sup>z</sup> Written 1839 at Budleigh Salterton.

man countenance, "the image of God" is moulded upon it; it is raised aloft upon our ships; it is formed involuntarily (at least now) on our doors, our windows, our streets, our roads, on dress, on furniture, on ornaments, on the soldier's sword and spear, on the very mills which prepare our "daily bread," that we may at all times think on it, and regard nothing common which God has cleansed and sanctified, as in Christ He hath our world, and all which it contains. Think then nothing too little; keep the hold over thyself; cross thy own desires; deny thyself at one time in sleep, that thou mayest pray, or do some duty the better; at another, as to some luxury, or food; in what is called and, if not in excess, is innocent pleasure; in thy words; in permitted enjoyments; relinquish what you wish, and practise what you wish not; make it your object so to do, in order to school yourselves and have the habit of self-denial. (2.) Then also follow our Lord's rule literally, "Take up thy Cross *daily*." Make it a rule *every day* to deny thyself something, because thy Lord has enjoined it. Watch thyself, and if through human frailty thou forgettest it on any day, humble thyself, be the more diligent, and deny thyself the more resolutely on the next. (3.) Fail not to observe any the slightest intimation given within thee, to deny thyself; and if thou be faithful, God "will gird thee, and carry thee whither" of thyself "thou wouldest not," but on a way which leads to Him and His eternal glory. (4.) The fasts which God hath through His Church appointed, are an excellent way of learning to bear the Cross.

They have many other ends; they will free thee from many temptations; they will tend to keep thee humble; they have the promise that "thy Father, which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly;" but they are also learning to bear the Cross. Let any observe the weekly fast of the Church on the day whereon his Lord died on the Cross for him; let him observe it in penitent humble memory of those Sufferings and of his own sins; and he will learn more of the doctrine of the Cross, he will be more drawn to his Lord, and to the Cross of his Lord, than by any profession of the lips, that he would know nothing but Christ, and Him crucified: he will indeed know Christ crucified, if he bear His Cross, for He will graciously make Himself known to His disciples. (5.) And as this is an austere part of the doctrine of the Cross, so it is very near another portion which is the most joyous, and the easiest to begin with—self-denying charity. Fast, that you may give to the poor what you deny yourself; deny yourself that you may give; condemn luxuries, or, at times, even comforts, that you may give; give up from time to time enjoyment; think what luxuries you may abandon; what superfluities you may part with; what habitual self-indulgence, if so be, you may break off; what ornament of the person, or the table, what show, what, that in any way centres in self, you may dispense with; how you may diminish your expenses upon *self*, and enlarge your charity to your brethren, and in them "lend unto the Lord." "Sell that thou hast and give alms," is thy Lord's lesson of the Cross; "and come fol-

low Me, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven," is thy Lord's reward.

There is much need of self-denying charity. Every where in this Christian land Christ's members are in want; are starving, starving in their souls; the young are educated to sin; women to temporal misery as a foretaste of eternal; our prisons are pesthouses; drunkenness, theft, and all other works of the flesh stalk abroad; hundreds of thousands upon hundreds of thousands of undying souls, in this our land, where we boast of the pure light of Christ's Holy Gospel, pass year by year from birth to Judgement, with no knowledge of their Redeemer, because we, to whose comforts or luxuries they minister, are reckless about them; myriads are cut off from the blessings of the Cross, because those who could relieve them will not bear it.

But we must not measure sacrifices by what seems great in the eyes of men. All are little in themselves; and the least will often be the greatest, the last first, the first last. The joy of building themselves a temple to their God, by that which cost them much, wherein perhaps their Redeemer's praise may be sung, and souls be gathered to His fold, until he comes again, might belong to many, but also to many not. But every one has something to give up, as a sacrifice to God; and so every one has some cross, which he may thus take, and thus be doubly blest, both for bearing his Cross and lending to the Lord. Think not then that you must wait for some great thing. What can be great to Him Who saith, "I fill the Heaven and the Earth?" Think not whether it be small; re-



collect "the cup of cold water" given in your Saviour's Name, and take courage. St. Paul knew not, when he first took the Cross, whither he should be led, and he was led, step by step, to the glories of martyrdom, and assured salvation; and God will lead you step by step, if you but take up your Cross and follow Him. It will at first be difficult to us, in proportion to our former sloth. Thrice blessed they, who have from their youth borne the Cross; but blessed they also, into whose hearts at any time Christ puts it to bear it. He Who put it there will help thee under it; He will support thy lagging steps, and strengthen thy feeble knees; He will gild it, and make it glorious and bright, and lighten it that it press not heavily upon thee; for He Himself will bear it again for you, and make it joyous.

May God give us faithful hearts, that we may pray to be enabled in earnest to take up the Cross of our Lord daily. May He make us ready to be partakers of His sufferings, sharers of His death, bearers of His Cross, "if by any means we may attain to the Resurrection" to eternal glory for His merits, "Who died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

"Now unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen<sup>2</sup>."

<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 5, 6.



## SERMON IV.

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### REAL OBEDIENCE, IN ALL THINGS.

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S. James ii. 10.

*“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”*

THIS has doubtless appeared to many a hard saying. It has appeared probably to be, in its plain meaning, contrary to what we call our natural sense of justice. We have not been able to understand *how* it could be, and so we have thought that we did not understand *what* it meant; and so some, perhaps, have been content to pass it by, some have taken up the one or other explanation, which might square with their ideas of God's justice and mercy.

It is undoubtedly a “hard saying”—not one “hard to be understood,” but because it is very easy to be understood. It is very plain and simple; it tells us directly and clearly that if any one should keep the whole law of God, except one point, he would just as much be an offender against the law, as if he had broken the whole. All his other faithfulness would *so far* be of no avail; this

one offence would taint all. He would be just as much a transgressor in God's sight, just as much an unholy being in the sight of the Holy One, as they who have broken all. This is rather softening this stern saying than making it harder. For the text of Scripture seems rather to say, that he shall have the whole weight of the law upon and against him; he shall become liable to the guilt of breaking all. So much however is plain; and the saying is hard, only because it is contrary to our notions. We cannot bear that so much responsibility should attach to our single actions. We would take things easily, and wish that God were like ourselves. We cannot bear the thought of strictness, of a rigid, unbending rule of right. We are wont naturally to measure ourselves by an easy, pliant rule, making large allowances for ourselves; looking on ourselves, as what we think we on the whole are: we shrink from looking into our actions, one by one, which might undeceive us. We shut our eyes against much which we *might* easily see; we pass over it lightly, and satisfy ourselves, that if we are not altogether what we ought to be, we shall, in the main, do very well. Against this loose, careless way, the stern peremptory voice of the text is directly opposed. It tells us that God looks upon us and our actions one by one; that we cannot be two sorts of selves, one a transgressor, the other a doer of the law; that the slight random way of keeping God's commandments in which people allow themselves, will not stand in His sight; that there is a strict, earnest rule; that He does not give His commandments to be dealt

with in a trifling way, but, one by one, to be obeyed, because He gave them ; that He seeks at our hands a full unswerving obedience; not a self-willed choosing amongst His commands, which we will keep and which we will leave, at *our* pleasure, but the fulfilment of them, because they are *His* pleasure; and that these wilful careless ways make us guilty before Him. “ Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

Hard, however, as the saying may to any seem to be, the occasion upon which it was spoken makes it yet harder. For St. James is not speaking of what most would regard as being exclusively grievous sins, but of what many would think a slight instance of a slight sin. He is not speaking of excess, or uncleanness, or sore passion, of strife or wrath, or any of the open sins of the flesh ; nor, again, is he speaking of oppression or actual hardness towards the poor, or carelessness as to their wants, or shutting up the bowels of our compassion to them. He is speaking only of an undue and improper respect towards the rich in God's house, and a want of kindly regard to the feelings of the poor, or of those, whom God's Providence has in any way placed as our inferiors in this world's goods. “ My brethren,” St. James begins this subject, “ have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect unto him which weareth the gay clothing,

and say unto him, Sit thou here, and to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool, are ye not partial in yourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts?" God forbid, that a minister of Christ should speak lightly of offences which God has singled out for condemnation, or use the world's language concerning them. Rather should we learn to judge of *them*, as God's unerring Word teaches; we should condemn such offences as He condemns them; hate them as He hates them; so shall we think of those more grievous offences more nearly as He judges of them. Yet the offence which St. James here condemns does not appear to have been one in itself of the more heinous sort. One would, at least, hope so; for it is difficult to see, how our whole Church and nation is not in some degree guilty of it. For what St. James condemns in words, that, in our modern places of worship, which we ourselves build, we seem to act, preferring, in God's presence, before Whom we come alike as sinners, and before Whom we alike confess ourselves unworthy to appear, the rich to the poor; allotting the best places to the rich, and thrusting aside the poor. It is difficult to see how our modern Churches are not, for the most part, built in direct contradiction to the rebuke of St. James. And we are suffering also from this sin. We have been alienating the minds of the poor from the Church, in which outwardly, at least, they are not accounted of the same value as the souls of the rich. We have been suffering yet more perhaps in the habits with which the rich have often learnt to enter the house of God, in the careless



way in which they come, as though they were showing honour to God, instead of being as we confess ourselves, "miserable sinners"—"not worthy to be called his sons"—who come to pray Him "to cast us not away from His Presence."

But whatever this offence exactly was, or by whomever committed, St. James refers it to the "royal law," "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and by that law he goes on to say, he who in such wise "had respect to such persons" "committeth sin, and is convinced by the law as a transgressor." So then, not this specific act alone, but all such respect of persons, as involves a neglect of that law, all inconsiderate, not merely any proud, treatment of one Christian by another, because God has placed him in a lower station, is in principle, condemned. Yet how common such offences, as we even walk along the street, or of masters towards servants, or servants towards their inferior servants, or neighbours to those to whom God has allotted a little less of this world's passing goods or comforts! Yet it is of these very offences, that the Apostle goes on to say, that who-so doeth them is "convicted as a *transgressor*," yea, "whoso keepeth the whole law, and yet offend in one [even such] point, he is guilty of all." So then, what I before said was the plain meaning of this passage of St. James, is true not of greater offences only, but of those of which we think lightly, that whoever breaks habitually any one of God's commands, although he should seem to keep all the rest, is, before God, as if he had broken them all.



St. James goes on to explain, in reference to the ten commandments, the ground of this truth. "For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law;" that is, that which makes sin really sinful, is, that it is breaking the commandments of God. "If we love God," our Blessed Lord says, we should "keep His commandments." It matters not then *thus far*, which commandment we break, (though some sins are, of course, more grievous than others,) all breaking of His commandments is a preference of our own will to His, of the creature to the Creator, of His gifts to Himself, of things earthly to heavenly. All breaking of God's laws is (as it may be) carelessness or neglect or even contempt of Him Who gave the law. Over and above the offensiveness of any sin in itself, all sin has, in common, one offensiveness, in that it is a disregard of His authority, Who forbade it. Whether it seems to us slight or no, or be in itself comparatively slight or no, it all has this heinousness, that it sets at nought His authority, is rebellion against Him, takes part with His enemies against Him, is, so far, a falling from Him, and an attaching ourselves to something other than Him. It is a forsaking Him, Who is the source of our being, the rule of all right, the fountain of all goodness, the spring of all life; and for Him Who is life and light and holiness, choosing somewhat else, which must be darkness and unholiness and death. Our trial, in this life, in one word, consists in this, whether we will conform our wills to God; whe-

ther endowed, as we are, with free-will, and having the power to choose good or evil, we will learn to frame our own wills to His, to make His will the rule of ours, to choose nothing, long for nothing, desire nothing, accept nothing, except what He wills; that so, being more and more conformed to His will, and thus again, being more and more joined to Him, and admitting within us more of His Holy Spirit, our will may, at the last, be one with His, and we may, throughout eternity, do His will, as having learned to have no will but His.

Free-will, of which men boast, is, in our corrupted nature, a perilous gift. At best it is an awful gift. In our corrupted nature, it is a freedom to choose good or evil, with a strong overcoming bias to evil; in our restored nature, it is a power to choose for ourselves that which God appointeth for us, to choose by a separate act of our own, unconstrained, uncompelled, that which alone ought to be chosen, the will of God. It is an awful dignity, with which we are invested, that, whereas inferior creatures fulfil God's law by the very law of their being and He Himself is their law, we have it left in our choice whether we will so do; we fulfil His law, not by constraint or of necessity, but by a separate act of our own. Amazing and awful gift, this;—one, which, for its very greatness, we might well shrink from, but that He has been pleased to lay it upon us—for a creature to have to choose, by an act of its own, its Creator's will; to have, in any degree, to concur, so to say, with Him, Who is the only source of power

and right; to have to choose for ourselves Him, Who is the only object of right choice; to be, in any sort, even so far (one dreads to say the very word) independent of Him, as to be able even to choose Him and His Laws by any act of our own. And well may we shrink from it. Having been made members of His Son and engrafted into Him, and so entitled to have His life, through the life-giving Spirit, flow into us, and having been conformed to Him, well may we pray not to be left to our own choice, but that He by His Holy Spirit, pledged to us, will master our spirit, direct, control, guide, impel, constrain it, that it should not be able to choose for itself, but choose or leave, as He guides it.

This however is the character of our trial in this life. This is the end of all our several trials, whether of doing or suffering, whether of choosing or abstaining from evil, whether of doing His will or keeping from what is contrary to it, to conform our wills to His, to do His commands, to obey Him. And therefore, *thus far*, whatever it be, whether, as we think, in a matter great or small, all transgression has this heinousness, that it is a going against the will of Him Who is alone good and right, the Good God. All is going against the only end, for which we and all creatures were created, to do His will and glorify Him. All is setting up some other god in our hearts, whom to worship and whom to serve, than Him the Only God. I need not say, how much more grievous this offence becomes in Christians, by how much the more loving, God has shewn

Himself to us. The amazing loving-kindness which He has shown us, in saving, loving, choosing us, and giving us again the power which we had lost, freely to love and choose Him, must awefully heighten our unthankfulness in choosing and loving any thing beside Him, out of Him.

This then is the task we have to learn through life, to prefer God and His will to every thing besides Him, not to serve Him with a divided and half service, not to serve sometimes Him (as we think), sometimes ourselves, but to serve Him wholly, not halting between the two ways, but cleaving wholly to Him; not, as Scripture says, with "a double heart," "with a heart and a heart<sup>a</sup>," one heart, as it were, for God, and one for the world; and so, as St. James says, "unstable in all our ways," doing nothing steadfastly, nothing perseveringly, but going first this way, then that, as if we were two selves, but serving our God with a whole heart. For then only do we love God really, when we love Him wholly. God is One, and if we in any way prefer any thing besides God to God, although in other things we think to serve Him, God is the second object with us, i. e., we account something higher, of more value to us than God, and make it our god. On one side is the Creator, on the other the creature. We must choose wholly the One, the Creator, or we do choose the other, the creature. We have our choice given between the two. There can be no choice, without preference. Whenever there is a choice to be made,

<sup>a</sup> As it is literally in the Hebrew; see margin of English Bible, 1 Chr. xii. 33, Ps. xii. 2.



if we choose the creature against the will of God, no matter how small it seem, we are rejecting the Creator. Nay in one way, its very smallness makes the act more grievous, in that, for a small matter, we go against the will of God.

This we do not like to think: we would fain deceive ourselves; we would not be brought to see what we are really doing; we would fain persuade ourselves that we may on the whole be serving God, while we are following in some things our own wills; that we may be (as we readily own ourselves, if it may serve our end,) imperfect servants, while in some lesser things, as we deem them, we are serving ourselves, and not serving God: that we may in some things not be serving God, and yet not be breaking away from His service and serving Satan. We do not like to be driven to make the choice, to see the real state which we are in, lest we should be obliged to come to a hard and painful struggle, to part with what it would cost us much to part with, or else confess nakedly to ourselves, that we are not serving God, and have therefore not to look for the reward of those who serve Him, but for "the wages of sin," that is, "death."

To hinder us from so deceiving ourselves and perishing, does God so often, throughout Holy Scripture, inculcate on us the duty and necessity of serving Him with a *whole* heart. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind," is, our Lord tells us, "the first and great commandment" of the law. This whoso did, He said, was "not far from the



kingdom of heaven." This He teaches at the very entrance into that kingdom; "No man *can* serve two masters; for either he will hate this one and love that one, or else he will hold to that one, and despise this one. Ye *cannot* serve God and mammon."

He knew what is in our hearts; He knew the temptations to which we are exposed; He knew that many would wish to persuade themselves that they were His disciples, whom yet He should have to disown; He knew that many would long to unite these two services, to serve God and yet not relinquish Mammon, and therefore He so lovingly yet earnestly warns us that we *cannot* do it. He Who is "the way, the truth, and the life," tells us that this is not the way to Him Who is our life, but the pathway to death. He would save us from the labour and vexation of this divided unprofitable service. He Who has bought us would make us wholly His.

And so throughout the whole Bible, faithful acceptable service is entire whole service. It is the character which God gives to David, "He kept My commandments and followed Me with *all* his heart, to do only right in Mine eyes<sup>b</sup>." On this hung the promise to those after him, "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth, with *all* their heart, and with *all* their soul." This was the praise given to righteous kings, Jehoshaphat, and Asa, and Hezekiah<sup>c</sup>, that they "sought the Lord with all their heart," with

<sup>b</sup> 1 Kings xiv. 8.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Chron. xxii. 9, 1 Kings xv. 14,

<sup>c</sup> 2 Chron. xv. 17, 2 Kings xx. 3.

a "perfect heart." This was the ground of their well-doing. "In every work that he began, in the service of the house of God, and in the law and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with *all his heart* and prospered<sup>d</sup>." This was the character of true penitence. "They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with *all* their heart, and with *all* their soul<sup>e</sup>. This was the condition of finding the Lord. "All Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with *all* their heart, and sought Him with their *whole* desire, and He was found of them<sup>f</sup>. This was the prayer of David and God's saints, and in them of the Church. "O knit my heart unto Thee, that I may fear Thy Name<sup>g</sup>," i. e., knit it together that it be wholly one, and wholly Thine. This was their profession. "I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart<sup>h</sup>." These were their hopes, that God would dwell with them, and continue their God. "When wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk in my house with a *perfect* heart<sup>i</sup>." This was their hope, that He would not let them go astray. "With my *whole* heart have I sought Thee, O let me not wander from Thy commandments<sup>k</sup>." These are they whose end is peace, they whose heart is "perfect," whole. This was the praise of the patriarchs Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Job<sup>l</sup>, that they were "perfect," "plain," entire. This was the prophecy of our evangelical Christian obedience,

<sup>d</sup> 2 Chron. xxxi. 21.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Chron. xv. 12.

<sup>f</sup> v. 51.

<sup>g</sup> Ps. lxxxvi. 11, Ps. cxix. 69.

<sup>h</sup> Ps. ci. 2.

<sup>i</sup> Ps. cxix. 10, 145.

<sup>k</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 37.

<sup>l</sup> Gen. vi. 9,

xvii. 1, xxv. 27, Job i. 1, 2, 3.

this the condition of spiritual life. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with *all* thine heart and with *all* thy soul, that thou mayest live<sup>m</sup>."

Such is the praise of God's saints, wholeness, entireness of heart; contrariwise of many whom Scripture blames, this only is recorded, that they sinned in one point.

This is the condemnation of Jehu, "that he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with *all his heart*<sup>n</sup>; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin." This one sin so spoiled all his other obedience, that the blood of the house of Ahab, which he had shed in execution of God's decree, was visited upon his house. "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu," saith God<sup>o</sup>. Thus for one sin, other deeds became guilt to him; breaking one command, he became guilty of all. This was the condemnation of all the better kings of Israel, that they still would not depart from the *one* sin of Jeroboam; this of all Israel, "their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty<sup>p</sup>." This is the character of a repentance hateful, unaccepted by God, "For all this, treacherous Judah hath not turned unto Me with her *whole* heart, but feignedly," wherefore, He saith also, "backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah."

Consider, again, brethren, how God has in the

<sup>m</sup> Deut. xxx. 6.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Kings x. 30.

<sup>o</sup> Hosea i. 4.

<sup>p</sup> Hos. x. 2.

good chastised, in the evil how He has punished *single* sins; doubtless, meaning in part to impress upon us the awfulness of single transgressions, of breaking the law in one point. The breaking of one command, and that as it would seem slight, and for which we see no reason except that it was God's will, cast our race out of Paradise. One transgression of one man made the whole human race sinners, brought death into the world, and placed us all under God's wrath. One act of filial disobedience brought a curse on the whole race of Ham. One contempt of his birthright caused Esau to forfeit it altogether, so that "he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Yet how much had he which we should think noble! One act of disobedience took away the kingdom from the house of Saul, yet how well did he begin! Failure in one temptation made Jeroboam, the trust-worthy, the chosen of God, a by-word and an apostate. One sin (vanity) made Absalom a parricide. One allowed sin (covetousness) made it better for Judas, had he never been born; and it sadly adds to the awfulness of the warning, that in that his final sin he knew not what he was doing; he was left to betray his Lord, unknowingly, in a manner; he sinned so much more terribly than he knew of; he betrayed through covetousness the innocent blood, but thought not that it would be shed; and yet doth Holy Scripture speak so terribly of him.

Or, to turn to God's servants whom He chastised. One unadvised speech lost Moses the entrance into Canaan. One act of deceit made Jacob



an outcast and a wanderer. For one act of disobedience was the prophet slain, who had fearlessly borne faithful testimony against Jeroboam and all Israel in the very day of their rebellion; that one act has stained all his faithfulness, and he is known by the name of the "disobedient prophet." For one grievous sin did the sword never depart from the house of David, though, in all besides, Scripture bears him witness, "<sup>a</sup>he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing, that He commanded him, all the days of his life." For one act did the young ruler, who had kept all the commandments from his youth up, and whom Scripture saith our Lord, beholding, loved him, lose—we know not what besides, but—at all events the privilege of being one of the first followers of our Lord.

Such, brethren, is the awful way in which Holy Scripture itself explains the text; such, in God's sight, is the character of single sins; of single acts of sins, of which men think so lightly. Yet consider also, how seldom sins are single! "A little leaven," Scripture saith, "leaveneth the whole lump;" a single sin will taint the whole man. Even heathen acknowledged that virtues were bound together with a golden band, so that no one could have one virtue perfectly who had not all. Sins too are interwoven together in a sad chain, so that one sin opens the door for others, draws them in after it, spots and pollutes every thing else, even what, but for this, might have been acceptable service, even when it does not draw the whole man to

<sup>a</sup> 1 Kings xv. 5.



perdition. There have been, who have given way to one wrong habit, only half knowing that it was wrong, not realizing that it was sin, except that they resolved against it; and these have, towards the close of life, had their eyes opened, seen their sin. But then they saw also how it had spoiled the whole of their conduct, how it spread like a cancer, eating out and corrupting what was good; how what they fell short in could be traced to this one sin; how the evil they at any time did, was its bitter fruit. Consider too how sins are joined together; how sensuality, for instance, is linked with hard-heartedness, or with anger, and irritability and cruelty; how self-indulgence produces inability to pray or to repent; how over-eagerness about worldly things steals away our prayers, and often men's belief in the True God altogether; or how vanity produces jealousy, and jealousy envy, hatred, slander, deceit, malignity, discontent at God's graces in another,—at last, as we see, in Cain, murder. Look how sins apparently the most opposite are by a subtle band joined together; vanity, or the love of man's praise, and lying which even man despises; extravagance and covetousness; or what seem to have nothing to do with each other, as St. Paul says, idolatry was the root of lust and all that frightful list of sins, to which he tells us, human nature was once abandoned<sup>r</sup>; or, our own experience shows, how sabbath-breakers go on to drunkenness and working ill to their neighbours; or proverbs tell us in a practical way, that "idleness is the parent of all sins<sup>s</sup>." Whoever has

<sup>r</sup> Rom. i.<sup>s</sup> L'oisiveté, mère de tous les vices.

been awakened to see in himself any one such sin, and has traced it through his life, has been amazed to see how on every side it branched off into other sin, how it spoiled his whole self. This, too, any can, at all events, see in others, and in others may learn to know themselves; how many a fair character is stained by one sin, how many a person seems to us all but in the right way, but is held back by one sin: how many a person who seems on the whole in the right way, is still hindered from making progress in it and being an eminent Christian, by one sin. How often do we remark, "How excellent a person such an one would be, but for that *one* thing in them!" "What a pity that such an one should be (as it may be) vain, or irritable, or anxious to get on in life!" This one leprous spot of vanity, or anger, or ambition, infects all; this one seed of corruption cankers what was otherwise blossoming so fairly and with so much promise. The chain round one little limb keeps the whole man a prisoner. The failure to decide aright in one point mars all other service or puts a person altogether in a wrong course. It hinders, at the very best, what might have been high self-denying duty, and reward proportionate.

Thus does conscience itself, thus does our own implanted sense of right bear witness to the text; and not less our daily judgement in the things of this life. We count him a madman, who though in his senses on all points but one, is on that one point insane. We count him a bad servant, who, though on other points good, has one incurable fault to which he is continually yielding. We

count him a disobedient son, who on one point ever disobeys. And are we then good servants, if we, in one thing, ever neglect the commands of our Gracious Master? Are we good sons, if we, in one thing, ever disobey our compassionate Father? Are we not worse than mad, if in one thing we ever prefer earth (and with earth, hell) to heaven? Are we not guilty, if in one thing we ever offend God?

Yea, a man's own conscience, till it be seared, will bear witness in another way. He will have no rest. The consciousness of one indulged sin will not allow him rest. He condemns himself, and does what he condemns. He has no life in his devotions, no pleasure in the thoughts of God, no comfort in thinking of a world to come. His own heart condemns him; all is with him uncertainty and anxiety; and should God, "Who is greater than his heart and knoweth all things," pass on him the sentence of his own heart, he would be condemned. Whoever among you, brethren, is such an one, knows this, which I say, to be a sad truth.

Then also Satan, in a fearful way, bears witness to the truth. There is no more common temptation by which the accursed one would plunge man into deeper, more hopeless, sin than this. He persuades them to commit the first sin by telling them it is slight; and then he perverts the Apostle's truth, and tells them its heinousness, and that they are his; that they may as well go on in sin, and breaking other commands of God, because breaking one is enough to condemn them. One habitual

sin *does* condemn them ; yet one sin is not so hard to break from ; and so Satan would lead them on to other sins, both because he has pleasure in man's sins, and because they will so be tenfold his, and bound by the chain of their sins, and, as he hopes, will never be freed. Yet it is a truth, which he thus perverts, that as long as they go on breaking one commandment, they are condemned. There is a common proverb, by which men express that if they have gone any way in what is wrong, they may as well take their fill both of the enjoyment and of the sin. They feel themselves shut out from heaven by their one sin ; they have no hope beyond the grave, and so they may as well have the miserable consolation of "the pleasures of sin for a season ;" if therein they may forget themselves and their doom. What again is more common than to have some one habitual sin alleged as the reason why a sinner should not avail himself of some means of grace, or break off any other evil habit ? It may be well for others, they say, but what is it to me ? how can I do it ? It may be well for others to keep holy God's day, to go to Church, to read God's Word, to pray to Him, to thank Him, but what have I, such as I am, to do with these things ?

Such terrible witness does God give to the fearful character of single sins, in His Word and in His dealings ; in His judgements and in His chastisements ; in our own consciences ; in the sad corruption, defiling what is good ; in the heaped-up sins of the bad ; in man's fearful looking for judgement to come. And this all falls in with what



the Apostle subjoins to this very declaration, "so speak ye and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty," i. e., by the rules of the Gospel. "Ye have been set free," he seems to say, "by God's mercy in the Gospel; take heed how ye speak and how ye act, for by that Gospel and according to those talents committed to you, shall ye be judged. Ye have received the gifts of the Gospel, bring forth the obedience of the Gospel."

Yet in one more way we may see that we must strive to obey in all things, or we do not obey at all. Our trials, for the most part, consist but in a few things. Satan is not allowed, as with Job, to try us in every part, to see whether there be any unsoundness in us. We are not given with St. Peter, to be "sifted as wheat," our whole selves shaken and tossed by his trials. Such was the lot of great saints. Our temptations are for the most part few and little in proportion to our own littleness. From many sins we are exempted, not by our diligence or faithfulness, but by God's mercy providing that we "should not be tempted above that we are able." If we fail continually in one or two sorts of trials, it may be that we are failing just in what forms our probation, and in what we are to be judged by. What service or what trial is it, if a person fails not when he is not tempted? if the covetous be not a waster? if the slothful be not worldly, or the worldly not slothful? if the easy-natured be not soon angry, or the passionate be not malicious? Yet thus is it that people continually deceive themselves. They



see that they have not all sins; they have some natural virtues such as the very heathen had; they sin not when they have no temptation; and so, though they fail whenever they *are* tempted, they flatter themselves that all is well, because not being tempted in all, they do not fail in all. Yet what account shall they be able to give of themselves in the Great Day, who, wherein they were tried, failed, and only did not fail when they were not tried? Of God's eminent saints, on the other hand, it has been observed <sup>t</sup>, that they are thus eminent in the one point in which their chief trial lay; they are strong there, where by nature they were most weak. Moses, by nature impetuous, became of all the meekest; St. John, by nature fiery, became the very image of love and gentleness; Job, by nature impatient, became the ensample of patience; Jacob, by nature artful, is praised as a plain man.

What then, brethren? Must we then indeed fulfil the whole law, break no one command, or shall we at the Day of Judgement be found guilty of all? Is there no hope except in unsinning obedience through the grace given unto us? God forbid! for so should none of us have any hope. The text would stir us up to increased diligence, to examine ourselves, "to look well if there be any way of wickedness in us," and to break off what we find amiss, to rouse ourselves from our sloth, to dread lest even one accursed thing cleave unto us, to beware how we tamper with any one of

<sup>t</sup> In an University Sermon, by one of the authors of the "Plain Sermons."

God's enemies. It tells us what we deserve, not what, through God's overflowing mercy, we shall meet with. It tells us that we are in no safety, that we have no hope, so long as we continue in *one* known sin; that we are out of God's favour, that we are subject to His wrath. But it speaks not of human infirmities, nor of the sins which by our frailty we commit, and which we grieve for. Holiness is required of us, diligence, watchfulness, and that far more than even they seem to think of, who have some thought of their salvation. We must be saved in and through good works, but not in themselves, as if they could stand the judgement of God. We are saved, if we are saved, not by good works, but by Christ; after all our diligence we must be saved by the Blood of Christ; His precious Blood must sprinkle the holy things of the holy, and wash away their unholiness. Our diligence is not the ground of our hope, but an earnest that we are still members of Him, in Whom alone we can be saved. By it we cannot be saved except in Him, as in Him also alone could we have it or any other good work; but without it He will not save us.

As then, brethren, ye would hope to be saved in that Day, take heed how ye tamper with any single sin. Ye with whom, as yet, no one sin is habitual, see that ye let not *one* sin creep over you; or if any one is entangled in any sin, see that then he continue not in it. Search diligently your own hearts; be watchful, earnest: and as ye would find mercy in that Day, yourselves show mercy to others and to the poor. For so St. James

closes this saying, "He shall have judgement without mercy that hath showed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgement." The Lord grant that we may all find mercy of the Lord in that Day!

## SERMON V.

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### CHRISTIAN LIFE A STRUGGLE, BUT VICTORY.

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Rom. vii. 22—25.

*"I delight in the law of God, after the inward man ; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I thank God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."*

SUCH is St. Paul's first summary of the struggle, which he had been describing between man's better and his worse self ; his inward man and his flesh ; his conscience and his corrupt desires ; his better self knowing what is right, approving what is right, willing it, taking pleasure in it, but by nature powerless, sold as a slave to sin, and by it held captive, longing to do good, but, lo, what it does is evil ; wretched in its captivity, and at last freed through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Every one in reading this description of the struggle, this wretchedness, and this deliverance,

will have asked, "Of whom saith the Apostle this—of himself, or of some other man?" Does it belong to me also? And if so, when is the victory and deliverance to be given me? in this life? or in the next?

This it behoves us much to know; and to beware lest any wrong bias in ourselves be, in fact, misguiding us, while we think that we are jealous for the one or other truth of God's Holy Word. For men in every way deceive themselves, nay we are in most peril when we can seem to ourselves to be contending for God's Truth not for our own ease. Some men who would have this description apply to the unregenerate only, mean whereby, that themselves, having by Baptism been born again, have no occasion for any strife, and so may go on in their easy, listless state, avoiding gross sins, but not in earnest about their holiness, or to bring every thought, will, and way, into subjection to the law of God. Others who would have it apply to the regenerate, mean it to furnish an excuse to themselves for not gaining the victory over themselves. They think themselves assured that they do "delight in the law of God after the inward man," that with "the mind they serve the law of God," that "to will is present with them;" but then they find in themselves no great progress; their besetting sins are strong, they weak; and so they comfort themselves with the confession, "that in them (that is, in their flesh) dwelleth no good thing; that how to perform that which is good they find not; and so that if they do what they would not, it is no longer they that do it, but sin which dwelleth in



them." Thus, casting the blame upon their nature, they acquit themselves; and would make the confession of humility a cloak for acquiescing in sin. Thus persons, setting out from points the most opposite, meet at last, because they agree in one thing—they wish alike to avoid earnest strife with sin, to obtain contentment, without subduing it wholly; to find a resting place, where they may throw off their armour, take their ease and be merry; to rest on their lees, without being stirred or shaken, and yet to be in safety.

The due consideration of the Apostle's words will do away with both these excuses. For he speaks in this chapter of two things, (1) of a strife, and (2) of the end of that strife. There *is* a strife, and so they are wrong, who would think that they can live as Christians, without any strife or warfare in and with themselves. "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" this mass of death whereby I am encompassed round, and well-nigh overwhelmed. But the end of the strife is victory. "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" or, as he elsewhere says, after again speaking of the law, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" victory over death, because, first, victory over the sting of death, i. e., sin; and that, in the might of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In both ways men have wrested the words of God, as neither are we to suppose that Satan's resources are so poor, his deceivableness so little, that he assaults, or deceives, or misleads, in one

way only. He will teach people to rest in forms, or to despise forms; to employ the means of grace, without using them as means of grace, or to neglect them; to make all religion rest in certain feelings, or to be careless about their affections to Almighty God; to forget God in one's self, while doing much to promote His glory, or to be careless about giving scandal and offence; to be content with holding a belief without living in it or on it, or to think moral conduct (as it is called) all in all, and that it matters not what we believe, so people's lives, as they fancy, are in the right, and so on. And so we must not look how any text may have been misapplied, but what its meaning in itself seems to be, and (when we can know this) how it has been understood by the Church.

When I say "its meaning," I intend of course its *chief* meaning, that which is the primary and prominent meaning of the whole passage taken together, in its fullest sense. For all sayings of Holy Scripture have manifold meanings and applications; they fit to the one or the other case, or rather the one or other case comes under them; they have higher and lower meanings; they take in the highest, and yet do not shut out the lowest; they apply to all our wants, all our little daily trials and difficulties, all the many thousand emergencies of the many thousand Christians at all times; they are written to suit all our countless minds, and dispositions, and frames of minds; to correct all, to amend all, to satisfy all our lawful cravings. They have depths for the profoundest, yea, it seems, which "Angels desire to look into," yet

they have that on the surface wherein "the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err." The same words are "milk for babes," and "strong meat for those of full age." They are the food of our childhood, and, since their depths have never been exhausted, no not by the meditative wisdom of the whole Christian Church, it would seem, as though it were to be a joy to us to know "the manifold wisdom of God" therein, even when we see Himself, in Heaven. Hence, in that they are adapted to so many varied ends, the same words present so many different faces, as it were, accordingly as they are differently viewed. Yet all have a likeness to the One Original, the mind of the Spirit Who gave them; all are portions of the one Truth which He laid up in them, but which we cannot take in as a whole, because it is the mind of God. And so when we attempt to draw out their meaning, we take, at one time, one part, another, at another, according to the degree of wisdom or insight which God has given us, or the occasion for which we need it. Thus, "daily bread," for which we pray, means both the food of our perishable bodies, and Him Who is "the food of Angels," the continual Life of all which liveth and of our undying souls, and again, more particularly, Himself, His Body and His Blood, as the faithful receive Him in the Holy Eucharist.

It may, then, be sadly true, that the words of this description of man's weakness, separately and by themselves, suit too well what Christians feel in themselves at times. Or they may altogether describe what too many, who have been made Chris-

tians, have brought themselves to. Or they may suit a part of the life of the regenerate, but not the whole; his condition as to some remaining infirmity, and this more or less, but not his whole self. Or some parts may suit the confessions even of eminent saints, yet not the whole; or they might belong to them in a lower degree or sense, not in the full meaning which they have in the place in Holy Scripture itself, taken as a whole. As many prophecies, which in their fullest sense have their fulfilment in our Lord or in the Church triumphant in Heaven, do yet belong, in a lower sense, to persons who were types of Him, or to the Church militant here on earth, so parts of this description of man's weakness may belong, in a degree, and in different degrees, to the regenerate or to some among them, and yet the whole have its fulfilment, i. e., be fully and entirely realized, in the unregenerate only, or in those who neglect the strength given them in Holy Baptism.

To take the strongest expression, the words "sold under sin," in their full sense, describe persons, who are wholly given up out of their own keeping, are no longer their own masters, but sin's slaves, whose price they have taken, and to whom they have made themselves over, soul and body, to do its bidding. In this sense it is said of Ahab, and of Israel in regard to their worst sins, "they sold themselves to do evil." Or it is said at once of temporal and spiritual bondage, that the Jews had "sold themselves for nought," where it is added that they should "be redeemed without money," freely, under the Gospel; whence alone it



would seem not properly to belong to our state in the Gospel. In their lowest sense, they could not mean less than that a man was so far out of his own power, the bond-slave, as it might be, of sin or of his infirmities, perpetually giving way to them, surprised and taken captive by them. Since, then, St. Paul says of himself, "I can do all things in Christ instrengthening me," one could not on that ground think, that these words were spoken of himself, as he then was.

In like manner, one could not think of any saint, that they would love a thing, *because* it was forbidden them, which yet St. Paul says of those whom he is here speaking of.

And yet other parts of what is here said, do describe what goes on not in backsliding only, but in earnest Christians, at times, more or less. We are taken off our guard many times, and "do the things we would not." People use angry words, or speak in an angry tone, before they are aware, or deceive themselves and are slothful, or exceed in food, wishing only to take what is needful; or wish to pray and, through infirmities, are distracted. Or, since the Apostle says, "ourselves which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of the body," we may well take to ourselves the words, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yea, well may we,—such as most of us are, even when we do wish in earnest to do God's will—well may we, in the thought of our daily infirmities and sins, from the depth



of our souls, bewail our wretchedness and long to be "delivered from the body of this death."

And these remains of our corruption will be felt by persons more acutely as they advance in holiness. A tender conscience, like a tender frame, will feel a slight shock more than a hardened one a heavy blow; a dutiful child feels the serious look of his Parent more than a stubborn one a sharp rebuke. So then holy men have used many of the words to confess their remaining weakness and corruption, and the hold which sin had over them, while yet they were not true of them in the sense in which they may be of most of us, or are of backsliders and the unregenerate.

What, then, I wish to consider is, not to what state parts of this description may *apply*, nor would I take out of any one's mouth confessions of infirmity and lowliness, which suit us mostly too well. I inquire only whether the description in its full, primary, sense, speaks of us; whether Holy Scripture contemplates real Christians as the chief objects of these words; whether the weakness and bondage which they speak of be the necessary, unavoidable lot of Christ's faithful servants in this life, from which, with all their diligence, prayers, tears, watchfulness, their new birth, and, as the source of all, Christ instrengthening by His Indwelling Spirit, they may not hope to be free.

Here, then, as elsewhere, the simple obvious meaning of the whole passage, and the teaching of the Church are one, that St. Paul is, in this place, speaking of people under the law, not under the Gospel; and not only so, but that it *should*

not be the case of persons under the Gospel. In this seventh chapter St. Paul is speaking of people's state under the law; what ours under and in the Gospel is, or ought to be, he tells us in the eighth. For, although the Church, in compassion to people who could not read much at a time, has divided the epistle into certain breaks or chapters, the eighth chapter belongs very closely to the seventh: the seventh tells us what we should *at best* have been, unless the Gospel had come; the eighth, what our state should be through the Gospel, as "the power of God unto salvation." I say, 'at best,' for what men for the most part actually became, may be seen in the hideous list of sins which St. Paul gives in the first chapter. But here St. Paul is setting forth the goodness of the law, and how men showed it to be good, even while it could not make them obedient to itself. The "law was good," but man weak. The law then showed him what was "holy, and just, and good;" and his own conscience, which God had given him, bore witness that it was so; that he ought to do that which the law bade him do, and not to do what the law forbade him. But to see was not to do. His fallen nature was self-willed; it liked its own way, and it did not like to be ruled. The law, then, was a burthen to it; nay, it became a reason the more to go contrary to it, that he was bidden to obey it. People will, through the remains of the old man in them, have felt this, that to be forbidden to do any thing was only a reason the more to make them wish to do it. They did not like to be controlled, to have a superior,

to be hindered from doing what they willed, and, therefore, they willed it the more, because they were hindered. This is what St. Paul says, "I had not known lust" (or concupiscence), "except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence:" i. e., by itself the law, so far from being of any use to him, was, on the contrary, the occasion of his sinning more deeply. He only knew partly, or slightly, or in some cases, not at all, what was forbidden him; and when he knew it more clearly, he only longed the more to do it. Knowledge by itself, so far from helping a person to do right, leads him only the more to do wrong. Such was the first sin: "God doth know," says Satan, "that in the day ye eat thereof, then shall your eyes be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" i. e., God knows it to be good for you, and so He hath kept it from you. As was the first sin, so have been all the rest, its fruits. All sin accuses God of harshness and want of goodness towards us. God hath showed us His will, and what He sees good for us; man, when he sins, would fain have something else to be good than God, Who is his good, or than what God has appointed for him; i. e., he charges God with having appointed him somewhat, which was not most for his happiness, and having withheld that which was. Thus God tells a man to be sober, not to steal, not to lie, not to covet, not to be greedy of this world's goods, not to love the world. Satan would persuade him to do all these things, and that so he should be happier

than if he kept from them; nay, that he cannot do without them: i. e., he would persuade him that God, Who knows all things, knew that they were good for him and in some way necessary for his happiness, and yet forbade Him. Frightful and ungodly as this is, it is the language of all sin. Every sin is for some end. It looks to some pleasure, some gratification, and it treats God as a hard master, Who grudges that which is for His creature's happiness. Sin would be wiser than God, and better than God. It would know what is good for His creatures, and grant it when He withholds it. And herein is the excellence of faith, as opposed to it, that it takes every thing cheerfully, approves of every thing, obeys in every thing, not knowing how and in what way it will turn out, but sure that it will turn out in some way to good; that though the way be dark and slippery, it will end in the brighter light, because God hath enjoined it.

Another part of the first sin was inquisitiveness. Over and above the temptation itself, our first parents would fain try what the effect of the forbidden fruit was. And this we have also inherited. It forms part of man's early temptations, over and above the pleasure which he promises himself, that he would experience in himself what this is, which he is forbidden,—what it works in him,—why it is forbidden. In children, in whom we see openly, what in after-life is more concealed, we see this; how the very fact that they are forbidden tempts them instantly to do what they are forbidden; how, when unrestrained, they take additional delight in



it; how a law becomes to them a reason to break it; how what they were scarcely tempted to before, they are strongly led to, as soon as it is forbidden. "We ever strive after forbidden lawlessness, and love what is refused us," is the confession of a heathen in the name of human nature, when left to itself.

This is man's worst state. This is the full effect of that wilfulness, which we may feel, or have felt, in ourselves, leading us to commit sin, simply because it was forbidden, disliking to live under control, wishing for freedom, not from itself and its own passions, but from control; a love of liberty, i. e., lawlessness, a desire of being without a superior, and so rebelling against God also, with hard thoughts of God, loving things because God had forbidden them; and as the Apostle says, at last "hating God," as being the Master Who withheld them.

But conscience will not always be still. God had placed a law within men, as well as without them. He had not only said, "Thou shalt not steal, or bear false witness, or covet;" but He had provided a voice within them, which should echo the words of His law, and speak audibly within their souls, "Thou mayest not do this wickedness, and sin against God." And this voice He at times made to speak more loudly by His Spirit, whereby He ever strove with man. And then the man became two selves, one which was set upon the evil forbidden him, and the other which felt it ought not to be done, and resisted, and strove more or less strongly, but in the end for the most part



gave way. And to this state of struggle there was, naturally, no end, no way of escape. Yet was it miserable. It was miserable to be split in two, against one's self, one part against the other; miserable it was to see that a man ought not to do what he did, and yet to do it; to condemn himself, and yet to do what he condemned; to strive and struggle, and wish to be free, and yet when the temptation came, struggles, hopes, wishes, to end in the same way, by giving way, and the better self to be overpowered by the worse; to be dragged along as a prisoner whither it would not, and to feel that it was himself which was being so dragged away; that there was a strong man within him, which had the mastery over him, and had bound him, and let him struggle a little, but still kept hold of the chain, and after a man had walked a little freely, held, and bound, and tied him down as before. This chain was sin. This it is, which St. Paul goes on to describe. They were carnal, fleshly, sold under sin; what they did they allowed, or approved not; and the law they did approve of: they willed what was good, but could not do it; what they would they did not; what they hated they did; it was a very law unto them, that so soon as they wished what was good, evil came, was present with them; their mind had one law, that written upon it by God, their members another; and these were at war one with the other, and the warfare ended in their being taken captive, being slaves to the law of sin and of evil habit of their earthly selves. "I see what is best, and approve it, I follow what is worst," is again the

confession of the heathen of the state of our race; and another, "I know how I ought to be,—to do, wretched man, I was unable." Well might the Apostle exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

And is this the state of the Christian? Is this to be the state of those who have been born again, who have been "made members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of heaven?" God forbid! Where then were the blessedness of the Gospel? Where "the glorious liberty of the children of God?" Where the victory given to us by faith in Christ Jesus? Where the overcoming of the wicked one? Where the promise, that "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" and that, "because greater is He That is in us, than he that is in the world<sup>a</sup>?" because Christ Who is with us, and in us, is more than they (Satan and the powers of darkness) that be against us? Where were then the comfort of our Lord's promise, "Be of good cheer, *I* have overcome the world," if we are still ever to be overcome, yea, He overcome in us? Oh, no! these are faithless, slothful fears, whereby Satan would despoil us of our crown at least, if not of our life, by wresting the truth, that we *are* poor, weak, frail, helpless creatures, ever ready to fall, unable to stand upright, full of infirmities, beset with manifold temptations, with the seed of corruption from our fallen nature still lurking in us; that we have weakened ourselves by our former sins; that they have taken such hold upon us that we are not able to look

<sup>a</sup> 1 John iv. 4.

up; that they are "a chain," whereby we are "tied and bound," that we should not go freely. Yea, he appeals to ourselves. Is it not true which the Apostle says? Have you not this "law in your members warring against the law of your mind?" does it not "bring" you "into captivity?" Do you not find, that when you "would do good, evil is present with you?" that there is a fault and corruption in most, if not all your actions? Why then struggle so vehemently, when with all your pains you will never get free? Yea, your chains are often only felt so much the heavier when you would struggle to get rid of them. No! so must it be in this life, the time of deliverance is not yet. Most of this is true, miserably true, of most; and all which could be said of our natural weakness and helplessness, nay of the weakness and helplessness of the new-born Christian by himself, would be true. But why let the accursed one fix our minds on these sad truths, these truths of nature, so as to make us forget the more blessed truths, the truths of grace? Why think for ever of the dung-heap, whereon we lay, and whereon, of ourselves, we should have always lain, when God has raised us, "the poor out of the dust, and lifted up us beggars from the dunghill, to set us among princes," (even the holy angels,) "and make us inherit the throne of glory?" And how? Hannah the prophetess goes on to say, "for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's (not Satan's), and He hath set the world upon them, and He will guide the feet of His saints<sup>b</sup>." It is true, that we are

<sup>b</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 8.

by nature weak, but "when we are weak, then," the Apostle says, "we are strong;" of "ourselves we are not able to do any thing;" but the Apostle says again, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." By nature the strong one (Satan) bound us; but God hath "bound the strong man, and spoiled his goods;" and we, who were once his "lawful prisoners," are now set free. By nature we were brought "into captivity to the law of sin in our members; but by grace," St. Paul goes on to say, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath *set us free* from the law of sin and death;" (i. e., being *in* Christ Jesus, we have received *within* us a new law, we have obtained a new law, that of the life-giving Spirit, which hath set us free from the law to which we were before bound. This new law is not a law without us, but within us; it is not only a law which we are obliged to obey; it is a law which gives us power to obey, which draws us, raises, lifts us upwards to God, as the law of sin kept us down to this earth. As it is a law of our bodies that they cannot fly upwards, nor leave this earth, so now there is a law given to our souls, whereby they may leave this earth, despise this earth, and fix themselves upon God. This law is that life-giving Spirit, which we have in Christ Jesus. By nature we should walk after the flesh, by grace we walk after the Spirit. By nature the law was weak in us through the flesh (i. e., through the power of the flesh over us); by grace the righteousness of the law is fulfilled *in* us (not *for* us



only) but by God's Holy Spirit dwelling "*in us*," who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." By nature we are carnal, fleshly; by grace we are, St. Paul boldly says, "not *in* the flesh, but *in* the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in us." We are taken out of our natural state in Adam, and we are brought into a new spiritual being in Christ; so that, though outwardly in the flesh, inwardly we are not in the flesh, not subject to it, its power, its laws, its tyranny, but freed from it, and *in* Christ. All which St. Paul says of man's natural subjection to sin, all that he denies of him who is *in* Christ. The one is in the flesh, the other is not in the flesh; the one minds the things of the flesh, the other not those of the flesh but of the Spirit; the one is subject to the law of sin, the other is free from the law of sin; the one cannot please God, the other doth please God; the one cannot perform the thing that is good, *in* the other the righteousness of the law is fulfilled; the one is death, the other life and peace.

These, my brethren, are glorious but awful privileges. Men are ready enough to accept the righteousness by faith, and this comes first; but then there must follow a righteousness of *life*. We have been justified, or made righteous, freely, it remains that we be sanctified. We 'believe in God the Son, Who redeemed us and all mankind,' but 'we believe in God the Holy Ghost' also, 'Who sanctifieth us, and all the elect people of God.' The Law has been fulfilled for us, it is now to be fulfilled *in* us. While we renounce all power of ourselves to do works well-pleasing to God, we



must claim, nay, we must not shrink from the power imparted to us, "to walk worthy of the Lord, *unto all pleasing*, fruitful in every good-work, strengthened with *all* might, according to His glorious power<sup>d</sup>." "This is the will of God, our sanctification." Christ came not into the world, died not for us, shed not forth abundantly the rich gifts of the Holy Ghost, that we should live unto ourselves, but that we should live to Him. Not for this "was the chastisement of our peace laid upon Him, and by His stripes are we healed," that we should become again thus sickly Christians. These amazing acts of God's loving-kindness were not wrought for us that we should live an indolent, easy, costless life, pleading our weakness as an excuse for neglecting God's strength, sacrificing little or nothing, doing little or nothing, and leaving undone little or nothing, but what we should have otherwise done or left undone. He hath clad us with our armour, not that we should sit still, but that we should fight the good fight, in His power trample "upon serpents, and *all* the power of the enemy," whom He has trampled under our feet; that we should subdue every thing to obedience to Him, bring all our words, thoughts, and actions into harmony with His law, make Him the rule, the end, the law, the life of our actions; in a word, that we should live *to* Him here, that so we might live *with* Him hereafter.

But then has this conflict with sin, which the Apostle describes, nothing to do with us? Is it a thing past or gone? Alas! not, many ways. From

<sup>d</sup> Col. i. 10, 11.

the conflict we shall never in this life be wholly free. The struggle with sin is not changed, but its issue and end. It *did* end in defeat and death; it should end now in victory, life, and an everlasting crown. There are four states, says an ancient Bishop<sup>e</sup>; the first, in which man struggles not with sin, but is subject to it; the second, in which he struggles with it, and is overcome; the third, in which he struggles and overcomes; the fourth, in which he has to struggle no more. Who-so knows not God, nor the law of God, submits to sin and struggles not. Awakened to the knowledge of God and His law, man struggles but is overcome. In and through the power of Christ in the Gospel, he still has to struggle, but overcomes. In Heaven, "they who shall be thought worthy to obtain that world and the Resurrection from the dead," shall have to struggle no more, but shall enjoy a blessed and everlasting peace. Our highest state in this life is to struggle, and to be the conquerors; and so all which St. Paul says of the two laws within us, would still find place in us, only that the end should not be defeat but victory, having been freed by Christ, to retain our freedom wherewith He has made us free.

But is this so? Alas, again one must say, that many who have been baptized into Christ are as though they were heathen, fallen back into the defilements from which they had been washed; many struggle a little, more or less, but still it ends in their being enslaved to their sins: many in some things walk well, but give way to some one or

<sup>e</sup> St. Augustine, in Ps. xxxv. and Lib. lxxxiii. quæstt. q. 66.

more temptations, whenever they occur; many think that they walk well, because they are freed from the temptations to such and such sins, but to others continually give way; in many the conflict is doubtful, sometimes ending in defeat, sometimes in victory. All these are short of the fulness of Christian privilege, and Gospel duty, and Evangelical obedience; almost all are in a state very dangerous. It is not, indeed, the amount of the conflict, but its issue, upon which a man's hopes and salvation depends. Often, upon attempting any fresh duty, breaking off any self-indulgence, labouring to attain some fresh measures of obedience, the conflict will be very severe. "At first wisdom will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws; then she will return the straight way unto him, and comfort him, and show him her secrets." Again, it is said, "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright, and *constantly endure*; cleave unto Him, and depart not away." Any great victory over Satan is not to be achieved without suffering. "The kingdom of Heaven is" to be "taken by violence." Of course, a man cannot be reckoned in a safe or happy state, so long as there is vehement resistance within him to the will of God. He cannot be happy, because he is divided, part with God, part against Him; he cannot be happy, because our happiness is in God, and he resteth not wholly on God. Nor can he be reckoned safe so long as he is thus fiercely as-

sailed by the foe. Yet it is not the fierceness of the onset, nor the length of the struggle, but the final issue, upon which all depends, whether at the last he yield or conquer. But though the struggle may have its dangers, absence of struggle is for the most part far more dangerous; for it will show mostly, not that a man hath the victory, but that he has not begun to fight, or is, at least, now sitting listless. For our adversary will not part with us so cheaply, that for a few blows dealt now and then, or at a certain period of life, he will not again assail us; nor are all the difficulties in the road to Heaven at the outset, although the most and the greatest are.

An easy, relaxed life, such as is that of most Christians, is full of danger. A man cannot fight who is unarmed, nor struggle when lying outstretched and softly; nor rouse himself at once in his full energy when the enemy is upon him. If he could, what sort of warfare were it, which were to be renewed now and then only? What were the need of continual watchfulness, of unceasing prayer, of "daily bread," were the conflict, for which all these are preparations, now and then only? Whoso knows nothing of daily conflict, (unless, perhaps, for some period when God gives rest,) is very far advanced, or scarcely set out. And therefore the elder Christians multiplied conflicts. They fasted, they watched, they denied themselves, that they might know and understand themselves, whether they were indeed in earnest for the strife. They kept themselves practised for more vehement conflicts by these voluntary essays. They did as men in worldly war-



fare would, kept themselves trained, disciplined, prepared, the eye ready, the hand taught; that the eye might see what was right, and the hand be quick to perform, lest at the time of conflict, the enemy should find them unprepared, and they perish. And this they did, knowing that the strength, wherein they warred, was not their own, but their Lord's, placed within them, but not of them. Would we hope to share their crown without their victory, or their victory without their struggles, or be "good soldiers" without "enduring hardness?"

In one of these states we must all be; either not fighting, and subdued; or fighting, and still subdued; or fighting, and subduing, (for our rest is not yet); and it behoves us much to know which. In both the first, men may, and do deceive themselves. They may mistake the stillness of death for the peace of Heaven; their own being fast bound in chains for their having the enemy bound. They may think that because they have no struggles, they have no defeat, and their whole life is one defeat. They stir not, fight not, and Satan, who holds them fast asleep, knows too well to disturb them. He often will not rouse them to any greater sin; for this might create resistance. They are asleep within his dominions, and so they are there, he is satisfied, and will not risk his prey, by tempting them to sins which might awaken them.

Again, a man may mistake ineffectual struggles against his sin for something on his part; he may think how he has felt, wished, striven, perhaps resolved, been almost in earnest, how he has prayed against it, and may contrive to forget that, upon



which in the end all depends, "Was he conquered or conqueror?" He may mistake the strivings of God's Holy Spirit within him, God's loud calls, and all the help which God hath given him, for something of his own, and so he may keep out of his own sight, that just that one thing which might have been his own, victory in all this strength given him, was wanting. All these feelings, strivings, comforts, calls, resolutions, purposes, may only be so many witnesses against him, in that he did not what was God's end in all these—OBEY.

My Brethren, let us take diligent heed, not in one or other sort of trial, but in all our trials, in which of these states we are? Are we sitting still? or being defeated? or conquerors? On this question hangs our life; let us not put it from us, nor answer it carelessly, or in the manner of dissemblers with God; but see wherein our own trials lie, not what trials we *have not*, not what temptations by which our neighbours fall, we are freed from, but what trials we *have*, and how we are acting in these. May God give us all grace,—to those who are now asleep, to rouse them wholly to fight against these His enemies, and to those who are fighting, to fight more resolutely, and to those who are fighting victoriously, to fight continually; never to lay aside their armour, never to relax, but to gain yet more victories over themselves and Satan; and, as their profession is, to "fight manfully against sin, the world, and the devil, and to remain Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto their life's end." "To him that overcometh," Christ saith, "I will give a crown of life."

## SERMON VI.

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### THE VALUE AND SACREDNESS OF SUFFERING.

(PREACHED ON THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.)

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Luke ii. 21.

*“And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His Name was called Jesus.”*

THE year, it has been said <sup>a</sup>, begins with our Lord, and our Lord with suffering. The very entrance on our new year is consecrated with the memory of His entrance upon His Sufferings: as though to check the thoughtless exultation with which people enter upon new periods of existence, and to set before us the truest and really healthful character of our life below. This year, as our weekly fast was changed into joy and a feast by the Birth of our Lord, so the feast of His Circumcision was, with those who acted upon the rules of our Church, in its turn, changed into a fast; and they

<sup>a</sup> “The year begins with Thee,  
And Thou beginn’st with woe.”

CHRISTIAN YEAR. The Circumcision of Christ.

had the privilege of being, in their little measure, by bodily discomfort, placed in harmony with the sufferings which they commemorated. To-day, in that that Epistle and Gospel are again used, is a continuation of that solemnity; and so it invites us in a way to think on the value and uses of suffering, which His meritorious Suffering purifies and consecrates. For the Circumcision was an earnest from very infancy that His whole life should be one of humiliation and suffering. It had also its own peculiar suffering and humiliation. For in His Cross "He was numbered among transgressors" by wicked men; in His Circumcision He, Who was without sin, deigned to offer Himself as a sinner, in that He took on Him the mark of sin.

The value of suffering is evidenced even by its universality. It is impressed alike on the kingdoms of nature and of grace; on the creature which for our sake, "was made subject to vanity," and upon ourselves. It is pictured even in the inanimate creation. All nature seems to mourn in the yearly decay of winter, or in the frequent drought of summer. Holy Scripture itself often speaks of it as sharing, though we know not how, in man's chastisements. "The ground was cursed for man's sake." The prophets tell how "the land mourneth<sup>b</sup>," "the earth mourneth and languisheth<sup>c</sup>; the world languisheth and fadeth away<sup>d</sup>; Bashan, Carmel<sup>e</sup>, the vine, the oil, the fig-tree, languisheth<sup>f</sup>; yea, it tells how, "being desolate," the land "mourneth unto God<sup>g</sup>." Doubtless, these sayings are in

<sup>b</sup> Joel i. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Is. xxxiii. 9.

<sup>d</sup> Is. xxiv. 4.

<sup>e</sup> Nah. i. 4.

<sup>f</sup> Joel i. 10, 12.

<sup>g</sup> Jer. xii. 11.

part intended to convey spiritual truths also; and the vine and the oil are also the nourishment of God's Sacraments and the influences of His Spirit, which are grieved away and dried up to the impenitent. Still God's word confirms our natural impressions from the sight of nature, and tells us that, whatever this may mean, it shares in the sentence upon our sin, and does mourn<sup>h</sup>. And if inanimate, how much more animate! "The lions," Scripture says, "do lack and suffer hunger:" our very daily sustenance is obtained by the suffering of creatures of our God; they suffer through each other; they suffer through us, even when we would spare them what suffering we can; nay, their suffering seems often brought before us for no end (which we can see), except to impress on us this law of suffering; we bruise them as we walk; the lights we use are sources of painful death to them; not to speak of their sufferings from inhumanity or very wantonness.

And for ourselves, we are all born through suffering; we die mostly through suffering: it is a common way of speaking of death, that it was 'a happy release' from suffering. To witness suffering which people cannot relieve, is often the greatest sorrow of attending on a dying bed; and they are so worn out, body and mind, with suffering, that they are often ready to part with those they cherish more than life, even before their time.

<sup>h</sup> "In wisdom's ear thy blithest strains,  
Oh nature, seem to mourn."

CHRISTIAN YEAR. Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

"Groans of Nature."

It is quite common to speak of the departure of persons loved, after protracted illness, as if it must be a relief even to those who loved them. Survivors express pleasure at the tranquil departure of those they love, as though this were an unexpected, especial mercy.

Life itself is full of suffering, which we cannot explain. Infants suffer before they can understand their suffering, or seek its removal, or know Him, Whose they have been made, or can consciously apply to Him for aid. Half of our race is cut off by these untimely sufferings, whose end we cannot explain. As we grow up, we suffer often from the mistakes, or infirmities, or unsubdued tempers, or want of sympathy, of those with whom we are brought up, or even of elders: our characters are formed by necessary discipline and suffering. Not many years have passed by, before life itself becomes for itself a weariness to many for very vanity: its strong days are spent in toil and weariness, so that people long for the evening; increased infirmities and sufferings are the heralds of its close: they gather one by one to darken the setting sun of this life. In the very order of nature, one season of the year is a period to be endured, a time we are glad to "get through," as we say. And this with all the means which we collect around us to mitigate or remove discomforts. What, where these appliances are not? If such be the case with those who are housed, warmed, fed, what must be the case with those who are day after day hungry, athirst, in cold and nakedness! What of the countries of our earth less tempered than our favoured



isle! Every where the rich are few, the larger portion are the suffering, the poor: and the rich have ills and sufferings of their own, resulting from their very state of living.

What need one speak beside of those whom we meet every where? How many traces of suffering! The halt, the maimed, those who have endured very acute pain, and parted with limbs to save life; and others are hidden from our sight, who are every where even now suffering the like. This is our ordinary lot; not to take into account the dreadful scourges of Almighty God,—war, (from whose worst horrors we, and we almost alone, have been exempted,) famine, pestilence, conflagrations, mangling of limbs, and the worse cruelties which man inflicts on man.

I have named only bodily suffering; yet Scripture says, “The spirit of man can sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” And yet all bodily suffering brings mental sufferings to those who witness it; and it is appointed that the departure out of this life, allotted to all, should, in each several case, entail sorrow on many, in different degrees, according to their nearness of love. And of these diseases, that which is the appointed messenger to carry off one-third of our race is one of lingering suffering, and removes them most often just as life seems opening most beautifully, and the heart most yearns over them, and most suffers from their loss. And, in this case, the sorrow falls heaviest upon those who seem least able to bear it, or who, as men think, least need it, the tenderest or the gentlest: and these are often humanly

irremediable; they cast sorrow over a whole life, besides all people's separate sorrows. And yet these are the least sorrows; for what sorrow is like sorrow for the sin of those we love? And yet how few altogether escape this sorrow! How will a thoughtless union entail a whole life of sorrow and suffering; and even if those bonds which we ourselves form, be "in the Lord," and so exempt from this sorrow, how few have not had either early friends, brothers, sisters, children, even parents, for whom they have been in fear and sorrow!

Who, again, could explain the distressing mental sufferings of the deranged, whose probation in this life, in extreme cases, would, to mortal sight seem to be closed, and yet their sufferings often seem to exceed all others, day after day, year after year, unceasing, unrelieved, hopeless?

I have not, in all this, spoken of the bitter agony, which is man's happiest portion, when he has grievously sinned. I have mentioned only sufferings which we see on the very face of things; and of these only a few instances, which may serve to recall other sufferings which most of you have in some case witnessed. And each such worst case which you have seen is but an instance of thousands of thousands of others going on continually, every where on this vast globe, in mind, body, and estate. Every moment, it has been noticed, must one of the vast family of mankind be passing out of life; every moment witnesses somewhere the parting sufferings, and the sorrows, of the bereaved, the orphan, or the widow. These are universal sufferings, coming by turn, one by one, over

the hundreds of millions of our race. But, distinct from these, how many cases of intense individual suffering must each of us have known, if selfishness hindered us not from realizing them, wearing out mind and body, or quenching in early youth each ray of earthly joy, or stunning, bewildering, agonizing, irremediable, unalleviated, save by endurance and trust in God! And each adapted to the several case of each, and that which each would most feel, chosen for each by the unerring Physician of our souls. And yet each case of intensest suffering which any of us may witness, is at most but one single unit of what is multiplied over the whole earth, one groan of that voice of universal woe, whose heaviest sounds reach His ear alone, Who hears the heart. Such has been the history of mankind since the Fall; such is to be its even course of suffering to the end.

So solemnly does the voice of nature prepare us for the teaching of Holy Scripture as to the necessity of suffering; so important a place must suffering occupy in the Divine dealings, since it is so allotted to all, and so largely. Suffering is the law of our existence. "Man is born to trouble," says Holy Scripture, "as the sparks fly upwards:" *i. e.*, man's suffering is a law as uniform, as unchangeable, as the laws which God has placed upon the physical creation, by which "sparks fly upwards," and so are extinct.

Nature could but mourn over her own sufferings endlessly. She bears witness to the fact, that "man is but of a few days, and full of trouble:" but she cannot lift the veil, or tell the ends of her

sufferings, what they are to end in, what end to answer.

Yet her witness may teach us to be still, not seeking to escape them. For how shall we escape what is allotted to all, or why shall we seek to avoid what, since God has appointed it for all, must have some good end? It were but to seek to exempt ourselves from His Almightyness or His Wisdom.

But here, as elsewhere, God teaches us the fact by nature, and impresses it upon our outward senses; He explains it, as far as is needful for us, and points His lesson in His Word. We see and feel that suffering is every where; we are assured that it must have some end, because it is so. Yet, even while explaining its immediate end, Revelation clothes suffering with a yet more mysterious character, and shows that it belongs to us as we are the objects of God's love, that it is allotted most to those whom He most loves.

The first full promise of His mercy after the fall was victory over him by whom we had been vanquished, through suffering; the bruising of the serpent's head through the bruised heel of the promised Seed. It was not until suffering had thus been spoken of as the means and condition of restoration and triumph, that suffering was pronounced upon us as the sentence of our race. Nay, our very sentence hinted that it was a blessing. It is not said, as in the condemnation of Cain, "Cursed art *thou* from the earth," but "Cursed is the earth for thy sake, *i. e.*, not merely, though in part, on man's account, but also strictly "for the *sake* of

man," and for his benefit, was the earth cursed. The thorns and briers which his innocency needed not, were a wholesome discipline to his sin; to "eat bread in the sweat of his brow," has ever since been found not merely a penalty but a mercy.

And as this was the general portion of mankind, so, as time went on, it was shown to be dealt in its fullest measure to those who were brought most near to God. Thus God has pointed out suffering as a condition whereby sinful men shall approach to Him; He made it a mark of His love; He prepared them to look for a suffering Redeemer. Who more vexed than righteous Noah, during a fruitless preaching of a hundred and twenty years, and the mockery at his hopes; or than the patriarchs, wandering as pilgrims, with no place to set their foot on; or just Lot, or righteous Job, or Joseph, who through a dungeon became the saviour of his brethren; or Moses, or David, whose "soul" was ever "full of heaviness," and cast out of the presence of his God, and who, in all his troubles, was blameless? Even already, under the dispensation of temporal promises, it appeared that troubles were rather the marks of God's people, prosperity of His adversaries. "All the day long have I been plagued," says the Psalmist, "and chastened every morning<sup>i</sup>." "They are not in trouble as men; neither are they plagued like men: therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain<sup>k</sup>." And, as the coming of the Saviour drew nigh, the sorrows of those who were on His side, who were (in whatever degree) His forerunners and representatives,

<sup>i</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 14.

<sup>k</sup> Ib. v. 5.



thickened also. The words, in their fullest sense, spoken of Him, had some accomplishment in them. Of these, too it was said in the martyr-Psalm<sup>1</sup>, "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." Then martyrdoms increased. The law, too had its portion in these faithful witnesses to the truth, who "resisted unto blood," though that Blood, through which their's was accepted, was not yet shed. The prophets drank of His cup Whom they foretold; they suffered in life as in death; they, too, were "signs to many in Israel," which, for a ministry sometimes as long as a man's full life, were "spoken against:" "all the people doth curse me." In life "they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, in deserts, and mountains, and dens, and caves of the earth"—emblems of Him Who "had not where to lay His head." They had (with Him) "trials of mockings and scourgings:" in death "they were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword, were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection;" even as the prize which St. Paul followed after, was "to know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead<sup>m</sup>."

These were but shadows. Human suffering, before or after, even for Christ's sake, is, of course, but a mere reflection of His Sufferings through which alone they become other than the penalty

<sup>1</sup> Ib. xliv. 22.

<sup>m</sup> Phil. iii. 9—11.

due to man's sin. In Him, Who was "the Well-beloved Son, in Whom the Father was well-pleased," yet the "Man of sorrows," are revealed to us their dignity, their greatness, their essentialness, in the economy of man's redemption.

Vicarious death alone sufficed not, without a life of suffering. That precious Blood-shedding was our ransom; yet it was fitting that the bitter sufferings of the Cross should but gather into one the sufferings of a whole life. In every condition He hallowed humility and suffering. Our Creed joins the first and the last, and, of His whole life on earth, rehearses but sufferings, "Born of the Virgin Mary" (as, at this time, in a manger, in a cave, amid rude oxen, and yet ruder men), "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." Every word is of humiliation or suffering. The Creed springs at once from the humiliation of His Birth to His Sufferings on the Cross. The sufferings of our late festival had in them something atoning, since then was the name of Saviour given Him: when "the days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called Jesus." He suffered in doing good, as in receiving evil. Words, which speak most of His vicarious suffering on the cross, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows<sup>n</sup>," were also fulfilled (the Holy Ghost teacheth<sup>o</sup>) in His casting out devils and healing the sick. He sighed in healing the blind; He groaned in Himself as He went to restore Lazarus to life. And if He had grief in the cures which He wrought when men believed on

<sup>n</sup> Is. liii. 4.

<sup>o</sup> Matt. viii. 16, 17.

Him, what when they believed not? what when they ascribed His miracles to Beelzebub, and gave out that He was in league with the powers of darkness against His heavenly Father? If He were so moved at the weakness of faith in His own disciples, when they could not cast out a devil, that He uttered the sorrowful words, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" what must have been the contradiction of sinners against His holiness? what that which St. John relates so sorrowfully, "The light shined in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not; He was in the world, and the world knew Him not," its Maker; "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not?" What that His love sought to communicate itself, but could find no entrance in an unloving world? The light shone, but found no entrance with those who loved darkness. His love was compassed about with hatred; they hated without a cause Him Who was Love; "they have," He saith, "both seen and hated both Me and My Father?" What must it have been to have endured the continual presence of him, whom, in warning, He called a devil?" Alas! how should we, who have so little love, know the sorrows of His Love? What should we, who have so little holiness, know of the griefs of witnessing unholiness? How should we, to whom, at best, sin is but a slight burthen, (since it weighs us not down altogether,) imagine the weight of bearing the iniquities of the whole world? we who know so little the love of the Father, what it was to Him to bear, instead, His wrath? we, who so

little feel the Presence of the Father, what it was to Him to have the Presence of the Father, Who in His fulness dwelt in Him, withdrawn, and Himself forsaken? All these, and whatever else we can conceive to aggravate His sorrows, have their end only in this, to teach us that of His sorrow we know nothing, that it was different in kind as in degree from our's, infinite and upborne by His Infinity, and heightened by His infinite Love which bare it.

And as He drank the whole Cup of sorrows, so did He impart it to those who were brought near to Him. As an Infant, He consecrated through suffering the infants of Bethlehem, and made them "holy Innocents." When His parents sought Him sorrowing, He seems to have taught them that they must needs be disappointed, if they thought to find in Him joy as from their child. To His only near earthly relation, His Mother, it was prophesied as a blessing <sup>p</sup> that she should share His sorrows. As He was "a sign which should be spoken against," so to her it is said, "the sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." The condition of a near approach to Him in His kingdom was to drink of His Cup and be baptized with His Baptism. His disciples were to be hated of the world, even as He was hated, and, for His Name's sake, to be persecuted, because He was persecuted. "Endurance" was the sign of an Apostle <sup>q</sup>. To "bear the Cross after" Him, the terms of being a disciple; "much tribulation" was the sea through which

<sup>p</sup> Luke ii. 34, 35. "And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary His mother," &c.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 12.



Christians were to "enter the kingdom of heaven;" sufferings "in the body" were the marks of the Lord Jesus, the badge of His soldiers; "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," was the source of the manifestation of His life in them.

Such then being the testimony given to the value and necessity of suffering in nature and in grace, in the perfecting of the Human Nature of the Son, which was without sin, in the purifying of us sinners, in "making perfect the Captain of our salvation," and in "bringing to glory many sons<sup>r</sup>," who were loved in Him; since too it was, when "endurance had had its perfect work," that these sons "became perfect and entire, lacking nothing<sup>s</sup>;" since "hope, which shall not be ashamed," is the descendant of tribulation; "tribulation working endurance, and endurance experience, and experience hope<sup>t</sup>;" since lastly the Apostle's benediction is not, that we should not be free from suffering, but that "the God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after *ye have suffered* for a while, stablish, strengthen, settle you," what follows? Surely this, that it behoves us, Brethren, to treat suffering, whether in ourselves or others, in a much more solemn way than the generality even of serious Christians are wont to do. In itself, it were a punishment for sin, oppressive, hopeless; through His mercy in Christ, it is His healing medicine, to burn out our wounds and purify us for His Presence. All are tokens of His Presence, the

<sup>r</sup> Heb. ii. 10.

<sup>s</sup> S. Jas. i. 4.

<sup>t</sup> Rom. v. 3, 4.

<sup>u</sup> 1 S. Pet. v. 10.



great Physician of our souls, looking graciously upon our spots and sores, checking our diseases ere they take deep root, or cutting deeply and healthfully into our very souls, if He have compassion upon us, when we have deeply offended Him. All, from the most passing pain of the body to the most deep-seated anguish of the soul, are messengers from Him. Some are spread over life to temper our enjoyments, lest we seek our joys here; some follow closely upon what is wrong (as discomfort upon excess); some gradually thicken upon us, if we neglect the first warnings; some come suddenly on an instant, to startle people out of their lethargy and careless ways, and show them that the life which they are wasting is an earnest thing. Some come in the natural order of His Providence, as the loss of parents, some contrary to what seems that order, as that of children; some are a new thing, as when He makes our sun to go down while it is yet day; some, it seems, are the immediate preparation for His Holy Presence; whence, perhaps, old age is so generally a period of suffering, and the last illness has mostly so much of heavy suffering. Yet all, if we will regard it, are His Fatherly care, tempering our cup with pain and sorrow, as He sees most needful for us: all, in their degree, loosen our hold of this life (as all pain is an earnest and preparation for our final dissolution); all lead up thitherward, where there shall be no pain: all humble us, as being creatures who require it, and deserve far more; all teach us to look into ourselves, to see for what disease in us this medicine has been sent.

All, then, pain, sickness, weariness, distress, languor, agony of mind or body, whether in ourselves or others, is to be treated reverently, since in it our Maker's Hand passes over us, fashioning, by suffering, the imperfect or decayed substance of our souls. In itself, it were the earnest of Hell; through His mercy in Christ, it is a purifying for Heaven. Either way, it is a very solemn act. It is the Cross changed from the instrument of shame, the torture of malefactors, into the source of life. It is His Cross, applied to us, not as once in Holy Baptism, a painless remedy, but "washing away our filth by the Spirit of judgement, and the Spirit of burning".

We must treat it reverently, as in His Presence, Who is causing it; not forming any rash judgement as to those who suffer, as though they "were sinners more than others." It may be that they are saints more than others; and therefore God is "purging them that they may bring forth more fruit," and burning away the remains of corruption from them. Any how it is a token that God has not forsaken them, but is still striving with them, and slaying them, if so it be, that they may live to Him. We may not then turn away from suffering in others, we may not mitigate it in ourselves, thoughtlessly. It is a form of God's Countenance, and so, whatever we do, must be done as a religious act, with religious prudence. Even in those sad cases in the streets, in which it may become our duty to withhold our alms, both because giving would be rather an occasion of sin, and that we may have more for those who

<sup>v</sup> Is. iv. 4.

really need it, we ought not to "pass by, on the other side," unconcerned or impatient at their importunity. Even when we must say with the Apostle, "Silver and gold have I none," we should with the Apostle bestow what we have, our prayers. Still less may we turn away from what is loathsome, or offensive, or shocking, or disgusting, in human disease and misery, even though produced by previous sin. Lazarus was "full of sores," just ere the Angels carried him into Abraham's bosom. Each sore may be an earnest of his Saviour's mercy, a touch from His healing hand, by which He is saying to him, "I will, be thou clean." If it were possible, it were better not even to relieve suffering, without sharing it. "Sympathy," "compassion," are not (what they are too often used for,) a simple, careless expression of regret for the misery of others, while shrinking delicately and sensitively from any actual contact with it. They are, as the very name implies, a "weeping with those who weep<sup>w</sup>;" a suffering with them, as being also members of the one body of Christ<sup>x</sup>; "remembering them that are in bonds as bound with them<sup>y</sup>," as Christ also did not simply relieve our miseries, but, "suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps<sup>z</sup>." It were the highest lot to be able to give up ourselves to minister to the necessities of others, by ourselves sharing them, ourselves enduring fatigue, watchfulness, irksome, revolting offices, in order to minister to our Lord in His sick; "<sup>a</sup> I was sick,

<sup>w</sup> Rom. xii. 15.<sup>x</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 12.<sup>y</sup> Heb. xiii. 3.<sup>z</sup> 1. S. Pet. ii. 21.<sup>a</sup> S. Matth. xxv. 36.

and ye visited Me." But short of this, and where this is not allowed us, and we cannot, without injury to other duties more immediate to us, bestow our time and labour for the most part directly to mitigate the sufferings of the poor, we should still strive to gain a share in our Saviour's blessing by self-sacrifice. Mere bodily relief, bestowed out of superfluities through the ministry of others, without the pains of searching out the objects, and involving no cost, may be accepted by God as better than nothing, but it is not Christian charity. And this is one indirect benefit of fasting, that it makes the rich in one way partakers of the sufferings of the poor. It teaches them sympathy, in that they suffer with them and for them, (that they may give in alms what they save by fasting,) and tends to give them, it is to be hoped, a distaste for luxuries at other times, inconsistent with the humiliation of fasting, or with the wish, by self-denial, to have mercy upon the poor. But bodily relief is one part only of Christian alms-giving. Its end is not merely the relief only of suffering, but that, as St. Paul tells us, "the administration of this service" may "not only supply the wants of the saints, but be abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God<sup>b</sup>." Bodily wants are not only to be relieved in a general way, but, as much as may be, to be turned to the good of the soul of the receiver, by some word in season, of advice or admonition, wherewith one Christian may, without invading the office of the minister, benefit the souls of others. And this is again a reason, why the

<sup>b</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 12.



relief of the poor should be as special as may be, ministered not through the broad, rough, wholesale, way of societies, but even if societies are advisable, applied, as much as may be, by individuals to individuals, Christian to Christian, in the Name of Christ.

And if this reverence and wariness is due in ministering to the wants of the body, how much more in the distresses of the soul, where God's hand is more visible in its chastenings! Here our temptation is, for the most part, the very contrary. The presence of such sorrow comes near to us all, is distressing to us, and so people unconsciously seek to relieve themselves rather than it. It is sad to see the wan cheek and the heavy eye, and so the thoughtless world would fain distract the grief, by calling the mind away from thinking on the subjects of its sorrow, and plunging it anew amid the manifold occupations or nothingnesses of the world. Distract grief! What is this, but to draw the mind away from *His* Fatherly Hand, Who is tending it, the one Object of our faith, our hope, our life, our death, and to rend it asunder amid the varieties of things which are passing away? What is it, but—when God is separating the soul from the things of this world, and rending from it every thing it loved, except Himself, that, alone with Him, it may at length turn to Him,—to encompass it anew with that vain show which it loved, wherein it forgot itself, its Author, and its End, to feed it with “the husks which the swine did eat,” and thereby to withhold it from returning to its Father and its endless home? No!



Grief is a very sacred thing, to be ministered to, with a very solemn fear, lest we be interfering with the ends of the Heavenly Physician. Whoso has felt it, knows the truth of that saying, “<sup>c</sup>I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal.” Human sympathy and human words of comfort float but upon the surface; the wound which God has made, is deep, far below, and can be healthfully healed by Him Alone. Man, unless he direct to God, can only do, what God pronounces wo upon, “<sup>d</sup>heal the breach” which He has made, “slightly.” Grief is sad, but the only lasting sadness were its fruitlessness. The true way of administering to grief, is to confess our own inability, and gently, as we may, according to circumstances, to point to its Author, and its healing efficacy, and its solemn import, and our duties under it; and that, though grievous for the present, yet that “<sup>e</sup>they who sow in tears, bearing good seed, shall reap in joy.” What seems the sterner sort of comfort, in that it confesses the severity of the chastisement, is yet, in that it directs to God, the most comforting, as well as the most healthful. It alone has power over grief, because it alone speaks in His Name Who sent it. Still more reverent ought we to be in those yet more awful cases, in which God more evidently “<sup>f</sup>chastens man for sin,” and brings terror upon the sinful soul. We may, indeed, in such cases hold out God’s promises of mercy upon repentance, but, as Scripture also does, in hope only, to be realised

<sup>c</sup> Deut. xxxii. 39.

<sup>d</sup> Jer. vi. 14.

<sup>e</sup> Ps. cxxvi. 5.

<sup>f</sup> Ib. xxxix. 11.

more and more by Him Who Alone can give peace, the God of penitents and Saviour of sinners. We may hold up the Cross, the sign of salvation; but He Alone Who bore it, can apply it to the very soul, and bid the sinner, "Go in peace." If it were right to call any system "soul-destroying," it would be that which, making present assurance of salvation its sole end, checks the healthful agony, with which God is searching into every defiled recess of the soul, and cleansing it for Himself, and releases it unbidden from its sufferings and its cure.

And for ourselves, to whom we are disposed to be too tender, gladly avoiding every touch of pain, it were well, while we are allowed to use what may mitigate it when we can, always to bear in mind that every feeling of pain, from slight bodily discomfort to mental misery, is in its degree God's provision, and so is not to be eagerly removed as a matter of course, but is to be dealt with respectfully. The best rule, perhaps, might be to remove it, if either now or in prospect it seem to interfere with the ready performance of other duties; if not, to bear it. Certainly the way in which we, the richer, are wont to fence ourselves against every feeling of cold, or hunger, or pain, and every ruder breath, to lie softly, to remove every slightest discomfort, if we can, the instant it is sent, and diligently to guard each way in which it may approach us, seems, unless health require it, like exempting ourselves from the order of God's Providence, and from a portion of our Saviour's Cross. The character which it tends to form is one sympathising in

words rather than in deeds. This delicate self-indulgence cannot truly feel for what it takes such care not to feel. We may well fear lest it injure us more deeply, when we remember warnings like that of the prophet, “<sup>g</sup> Tremble, ye women that are at ease.” It would probably have more to do with the mending our character in many ways, than we think of, were we content to lie hardly, bear incidental pain, or cold, or hunger, or weariness, without seeking at once to relieve it, unless it were for health’s sake, or to return more quickly to other duty.

And when heavier sorrows come, as it is often a privilege to feel ourselves allowed not to stifle them, so is it our wisdom and duty not to distract ourselves from them, nor allow ourselves to be distracted by others’ well-meaning kindness. Every sorrow which we meet with is a billow on this world’s troublesome sea, which we must cross upon the Cross, to bear us nearer to our home. We may not then remain where we were. We may not, when God’s “<sup>h</sup> waves and storms have gone over us,” be what we were before. We may and must bear our parts in the world’s duties, but—in proportion to its heaviness, and the loudness of God’s warning voice in it—not, as we did, in its joys. Each trouble is meant to relax the world’s hold over us, and our hold upon the world; each loss is sent to make us seek our gain in Heaven; the end of each bereavement is to fix our hearts thither, whither we hope the treasures lent us are removed. Each chastisement is to deepen our repentance for

<sup>g</sup> Is. xxxii. 11.

<sup>h</sup> Ps. xlii. 7.

those sins for which God has so chastened us. Sadder far than the sight of any sorrow, is it to see persons, after sorrow, become, in all outward show, what they were before, "recovering their spirits" as it is called; even as the impassive waters are troubled for a while by the stone which severs them, and then become calm and cold as heretofore; sadder far, for it seems like a casting aside God's healing hand, and rising up from under it when He is laying low.

Rather it is a Christian's joy, and comfort, and peace, and health, when God has laid him low, there to lie—humble, in proportion as God has humbled him; to lie low at the foot of His Cross, trusting that by the virtue of that Cross He will raise up those who lie willingly where He has placed them. It is well to be there where God wills. And so whatever it be, sorrow bringing sin to remembrance, or agony for past sin, or dread of Judgement, it is our wisdom not to vent it in excitement, much less to seek to distract it or waste it, but to take it calmly home to our bosoms and treasure it there, jealously watching lest we lose one drop of its wholesome bitterness; not anxious to escape sorrow, but anxious only not to lose its fruits, anxious only to escape with our lives in our hands, out of that place which the Lord will burn up, and from which, with the loss, it may be, of all, He is sending His Angel to rescue us.

This has been the experience of all whom God has chastened, and who have not disregarded His chastisements. "Before I was troubled," says the Psalmist, "I went wrong, but now have I kept Thy



word<sup>i</sup>." "It is good for me, that I have been afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes<sup>k</sup>." "I know, O God, that Thy judgements are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me<sup>l</sup>." "Blessed is the man<sup>m</sup>," not with whom all things go well, but,— "whom Thou chastenest O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law, that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged up for the ungodly;" *i. e.*, blessed is he, whom by chastening Thou instructest, that he may escape in the Day of Judgement, and have rest from the pit where is no rest. The experience of Solomon has been consecrated into a Christian proverb, "<sup>n</sup>Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth;" "if ye endure chastening," adds the Apostle<sup>o</sup>, "the Lord dealeth with you as with sons." Yea, He dealeth with us as He dealt with His Well-Beloved Son, Whom He received, perfected through sufferings, which He bare for our sins, as we bear them for our own.

God has stamped this truth even upon His own language in the Old Testament; so that "afflicted" and "humble" are denoted by the same word, in that humility is the fruit of affliction; as, on the contrary, the words "rich," "at ease," are in themselves used to express "the ungodly rich," in that riches and ease harden the heart. So our Lord hath said, "Blessed are the poor," "Blessed are they that mourn," without confining this blessing to poverty of spirit or mourning for sins, teaching us that poverty and sorrow are themselves bless-

<sup>i</sup> Ps. cxix. 67.

<sup>k</sup> Ver. 71.

<sup>l</sup> Ver. 75.

<sup>m</sup> Ps. xciv. 12, 13.

<sup>n</sup> Prov. iii. 12.

<sup>o</sup> Heb. xii. 7.



ings: as He pronounces, “<sup>p</sup> Woe unto you that are rich” and “unto you that laugh,” declaring riches and laughter to be in themselves evils, though with God it is possible to save the rich, and the poor may destroy themselves. And in our own language “subdued,” “chastened,” are characters of good; and we acknowledge thereby, that it is good to be “chastened,” and to have our proud hearts “subdued.” Again it is noticed how that form of misbelief, which denies our Blessed Lord’s atoning mercy, haunts those who are at ease, and have gained to themselves this world’s goods, and that prosperous traders are especially exposed to it; as, on the other hand, no one ever heard of a poor afflicted Socinian. “<sup>a</sup> When He slew them, they sought Him, and turned them early and enquired after God.”

And such has been the experience of individual Christians down to our own day. “I would not part with one pang that I have had,” said, after a year of acutest suffering, a dying man, who had passed his life in ease, rank, wealth, political estimation, himself, as it is called, the life of society, for talent and gaiety of heart, “I would not part with one pang which I have had, no, not for the whole world.” This he said to his most intimate friend who repeated it to me. On the next day he died. Another, after being for thirty-four years laid upon a bed of suffering, knew not how to thank God for this distinguishing mercy. Another on whom suffering had come in that most dreadful form, of sin in those loved, was found, after his

<sup>p</sup> S. Luke vi. 24, 25.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 34.

decease, most to have prized those sayings of holy men which spoke of the value of suffering. Many such cases all know. So that one doubts not, that in the song of thanksgiving, which shall be sung before the Throne, one chief theme of praise will be the “<sup>r</sup>great tribulation through” which “they came,” and through which they “washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb.” Others there have been who, alarmed by the troubles of the good, have dreaded to lose their portion, and have prayed God to “enlarge,” if it were good for them, “the sorrows of their heart,” and have been heard, where, had they thought of it, they would have most dreaded it. The Cup they would most have shrunk from was given them to drink, and, stripped of all earthly happiness, they found it health.

Happiest they, who, being faithful from Baptism, are counted worthy to share in the Baptism of their Lord, and suffer, after His likeness, to perfect themselves, and for His Church or members. Yet happy they too, who, purged from their dross through suffering, escape “<sup>s</sup>yet so as by fire.” Unhappy only they, in whom God seeing no good, passeth them by, and chasteneth not, or who despise, or murmur under, or would elude, His chastisements.

My Brethren, it is not without meaning that the two Sacraments, whereby we are united unto Christ and have His Life derived into us, are both blended with His Cross. “<sup>t</sup>Buried with Him,” says the Apostle, “by Baptism into Death;” “<sup>u</sup>as

<sup>r</sup> Rev. vii. 14.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 15.

<sup>t</sup> Rom. vi. 4.

<sup>u</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 26.

often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do show forth the Lord's Death till He come." Let us, then, who approach this Holy Table, not come to the celebration of His Death and to receive into ourselves His Body and Blood, His life and love, in an unloving, un-sacrificing spirit, offering only what shall cost us nothing. Here we may safely trust our alms, and that liberally, to the distribution of others, because God by His Church invites us; and such was ever His appointment and the practice of the Ancient Church. It is sad to see how people show least love, when they come to acknowledge His inestimable love, to receive "the pledges of His love, to their great and endless comfort;" and are then most penurious in their charity, when they come nearest to their Lord, Who bade us love our brethren, *as* He loved us, with a self-denying, self-sacrificing love. It is sad, how they will trust in their own ways and contrivances, and will not trust in those which God has ordered for them in His Church, and give little, because they must give in faith not by sight, not seeing how it will be dispensed.

It is time that when we are thus offering our first-fruits upon God's Altar, in acknowledgment that having been bought by Him, we, our souls, bodies, spirits, all we are, and all we have are His, and that we would willingly, by an act of our own, consecrate to Him what is His, this parsimonious way of giving should cease. There is much need. The extent of suffering among the poor of our towns, even where they are most cared for, is such as might well appal any Christian heart, lest it

bring the curse of God upon our whole people. Recent changes have turned the compulsory provision for the poor into a measure of restriction and police. Such is the law of the land, and it is not our business to speak against it. It may be made wholesome. Would one could think the change arose in the desire only of correcting misuse of that provision, not to save ourselves at the expense of the poor! Such savings would be a nation's curse. At least, let us free our own souls from them, and whatever we may have more by such means, let us give in alms! It may be right that the law should contract its provision, but only if the Church,—the home, the friend, the Mother of the poor,—expand her's. It may have been so ordered, that what is required of us has been lessened, that we may have the privilege of doing of ourselves what by man is not required. It may be God's will that the deserving poor are no longer to be adequately relieved by forced contributions, in order that the rich, with self-sacrificing liberality, may supply the really needy by a proportionate enlargement of voluntary charity. So may this measure become a blessing to our souls, if we anew give freely to God in His poor, what has been put again in our own power, to use or misuse, to spend on the world or lay up with God, as we will.

So begin we then this our new year. See how your charities may have more the character of a sacrifice. Follow His steps, Who even now made Himself poor, that we might be rich, and by suffering brought us joy, joy unspeakable and full of

glory. So when trouble and sorrow come upon you, as they must come upon every son whom God receiveth, the prayers of the poor, whom you have benefited, will ascend up for you, and your Saviour, to Whom, when commemorating His All-sufficient Sacrifice, you have sacrificed what is a sacrifice to *you*, will plead the merits of that His Sacrifice for you, He Himself will pour oil and wine into your wounds, will gladden you, amid sadness, with the anointing of His Holy Spirit, and cheer your heart with that wine, which is His Blood. He will detach you by sorrow from things which pass away, and by "joy in tribulation" lead you to Himself Who is our only True and Everlasting Joy, the True God and Eternal Life, where, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever One God, world without end. *Amen.*



## SERMON VII.

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### THE CHRISTIAN'S A RISEN LIFE.

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(PREACHED ON EASTER-DAY.)

Col. iii. 1.

*“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

WE are come to the close of a solemn and blessed period; a period, to sinners perhaps the most full of comfort in the whole year, God's most gracious gift to man; a period of humiliation, repentance, privation, discomfort. True, that we have need to repent of the unevenness of our repentances, to pray God to pardon them as well as the sins whereof we so repent! Still, a season of penitence and self-abasement is a season of joy. We may trust that it helps, by God's appointment, to efface those spots of sin, which we by our frailty have contracted; that it makes us more such, as God will have mercy upon; such, as His Son's atoning Blood shall cleanse and heal. That season is now past. Another Lent, which has been vouchsafed us to purge our souls for the Presence of the All-holy God, is gone; a record, it is to be feared, against

many who trample upon it; lost to many more; yet to many, it is to be hoped, and especially in this congregation, who know its privileges, thrice-blessed; rich in mercy according to the faithfulness of each; infusing, we trust, serious and humble thoughts into many; deepening the penitence of some; nailing them to the very Cross of their Lord, and making them, in however slight a degree, partakers of His sufferings and so of His consolation also. On all such, we doubt not, some healing drop has fallen from His Cross; some gleam of hope has flashed across them; the clouds have parted, and discovered to them some glimpse of things unseen; some ray of that nightless Morning has shone unto them; some yearning of the soul been given them, which seemed a foretaste of everlasting peace. While they bewailed and chastened their spotted and leprous selves, "virtue has" again "gone out of" Him to heal those who in penitence approached Him, an earnest of His gracious purpose towards them, and of their final cleansing at the Great Day. None who have in any way used Lent aright, will have missed some fruit of their enlarged fasts, alms, and prayers. May God, if He of His goodness purpose to bring us to another Lent, give us all grace to use it more according to His will, and bless it to the increase of our present holiness and our future glory!

But now that season is past, and we are this day entered upon one very different, for which the discipline of Lent was meant to prepare us; that having been, in Lent, partakers, in whatever little degree, of the Death of our Lord, we might now be

partakers of His Resurrection; that having then sorrowed for the sins for which He died, we might now triumph in His Life for us, which is the source and earnest of our own; that having then lain low, we might now with safety be raised up; that having then mourned, we might now, according to His promise, laugh with a holy joy.

This season also the poor world abuses. The season of holy triumph in Him Who hath overcome the world, is distorted into a slavish service of the world from which He came to free us. The world would have joy without sorrow, gladness of heart without previous grief for sin, Easter mirth without the sadness and humiliation of Lent, life without death, the joy of the Resurrection without watching by the Cross, or bearing it with Him Who Alone bore it meritoriously for us, and hallowed the instrument of punishment into the pledge of victory and glory. And so, since the world severs what God has joined, it cannot but the more abuse and defile what it takes. It would joy, but it is not "the joy of the Lord" with Whom it refuses to sorrow. It is not "joy in the Holy Ghost;" not "joy in God's countenance;" not "joy and peace in believing;" not "joy before God;" not "joy" which shall "not be taken from them," because it is not "sorrow turned into joy." It is not joy which, as well as the wisdom from above, is "pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits," but one which descendeth *not* from above, but "is earthly, sensual, devilish." The Easter joys of the world are joys in the world which it once re-

\* S. James iii. 15, 17.

nounced, in the flesh which it is to subdue, and the god of the world from whom it receives them. It is joy which, like the crackling of thorns, shall be but for a moment; a mirth which, for the time, is madness, and “<sup>b</sup> the end whereof is heaviness;” for which “<sup>c</sup> God shall bring it into judgement.” We must fear too, that the hearts of many whose joy is not of the grosser sort, are still set on a joy in the world as opposed to God. This joy is a joy in its pomps, its vanities, its excitements, dissipations, festivities, pleasures, amusements; a joy in it for itself, and ending, in it and with it, not in Him Who hath purified our poor world with His own Precious Blood, and made it to such as would lead a heavenly life, the visiting-place of Angels, the witness of Christ's Presence, the sleeping-place of the Saints, an earnest of the Resurrection.

Yet not to such only, but to ourselves, who in our different measures have been taught somewhat of the Cross of Christ, there are temptations peculiar to this season, as contrasted with that which we have gone through. As the whole period of Lent is that of deepest sorrow, and our last week the deepest sorrow of Lent, so the whole period from Easter to Whitsunday is on the whole a period of the greatest joy; whence the Ancient Church used not even to kneel during this period, but prayed erect, in token of the forgiveness sealed by the Resurrection. We are now allowed refreshments and enjoyments, which, if we were wise, we then put from us. There is a degree of risk

<sup>b</sup> Prov. xiv. 13.

<sup>c</sup> Eccl. xi. 9.

in all enjoyment, lest we use it immoderately. There is the more risk now, lest we should seek over-hastily to recruit ourselves from our past discomforts. Joy has always more trials than sorrow, feasting than fasting, lifting up than casting down, triumph than humiliation. It is easy, in comparison, to submit ourselves to a strict rule. To preserve due moderation, and keep careful watch over ourselves, when no longer under such discipline, is the harder task. Strict discipline suits best our state as strangers and pilgrims, journeying slowly to our heavenly inheritance; easiness of obedience amid a sea of joy is the blessedness of the happy spirits who have attained or are in possession of it.

It is then with tender care that the Church takes us by the hand at this season, and, especially on this day, in the Anthem and Epistle which she has selected as peculiar to it, speaks to us in tones of earnest warning, or bids us exhort ourselves to a pure and new life, conformable to the new blessings of this day. "Let us keep the feast," we began our Easter Anthem; "not with the old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," i. e., let us celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord by putting away anew all remains of corruption in us (for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"), that so we may be wholly pure and undefiled. "Christ," it goes on, "being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him; likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," i. e., as Christ died *for* sin once only, and thenceforth



death hath no more power over Him, but He liveth ever with His Father, so are we to have died to sin once for all, and thenceforth sin, the source of death, is to have no more dominion over us. We are no more to serve it, but to be free from it, and to live to God. So, in the concluding words of that Anthem, "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

And this teaching the Church carries on in the Epistle, of which I repeated to you the first words. "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." The festival, then, of the Resurrection is the festival of newness of life, which He hath imparted. It is the festival of newness of life, which we are to live here; and so of that new and happy life which, if we be faithful, we shall live where He liveth, in the presence of God, Himself with the Father One God.

It is the 'festival of newness of life which He imparted.' For the Apostle, when he bids us "seek those things that be above," calls us not so to do on the ground of any strength which we have of our own (this he knew to be weakness), but through that which God imparted. He (and with him the Church) trusts not to any feelings or longings of our own. They bid us not, "since ye celebrate those great mercies vouchsafed to you in the Resurrection, seek the things which be above." They bid us not alone to "raise ourselves in thought whether our Saviour is gone, and to seek our treasure there." They appeal not to any motives, or power, or will merely of our own; "Christ hath died for

your sins, therefore die ye to sin;" "Christ hath risen and burst the tomb, therefore do ye rise." St. Paul goes on deeper. He says not, "if ye *have* risen," as if it were an act of our own; but he says, "Since ye *were* co-raised with Christ:" an act done for us and in us. He speaks not only of our Lord's having risen for us, but of our having *been made* partakers of that Resurrection, of our having been co-raised with Christ? And when was that? When but when we were made members of Him Who rose again for us? Then all of His was pledged to us as ours. Then, when we were baptized in His Name, in the Name of the Holy Trinity, little as we knew of the gift, we were translated from our birth in Adam to our birth in Him, from death to life, from being under the curse to blessings unspeakable in Him, from slavery to freedom, from darkness to His marvellous light, from the power of Satan unto God. Then were we made partakers of Christ's Death, and having been made partakers of His Death, we were made partakers of His Resurrection. For so St. Paul teaches us in other places, as to the Romans (in this morning's lesson), "<sup>d</sup> Know ye not that all of us, as many as have been baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His Death? We were buried then with Him through Baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." Then had we, in earnest, given to us "that thing which by nature we could not have." We had it given us in

<sup>d</sup> Rom. vi. 3, 4.

the bud, as it were, to open in the flower, and hereafter to bear fruit. Then was the old man slain in us, by partaking of our Blessed Lord's Death; then were we made partakers of His Resurrection, being made members of our risen Lord; then was the virtue which is inherent in our Lord, our Head, transfused into us, the members of His Body; then were we made partakers of *His* might, Who had taken upon Him our weakness, that we might be partakers of His glory, Who had stooped to take upon Him our shame. Thenceforth all of His was made ours. For it was our nature which was nailed to the Cross; ours which, as yesterday, lay lifeless in the grave; ours, which as to-day, rose from the dead; ours which having risen, was placed above the highest heaven at the right hand of the glory of the Father. Whence He sheds down on those whom He makes members of Himself, that Spirit whereof He was, as Man, born, that they, through It, might be re-born, might be made members of His kingdom, heirs of His glory; here, with Him, to suffer and obey, and to reign with Him for ever. Then “<sup>e</sup> gave He us power to become the sons of God,” “<sup>f</sup> and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be co-glorified.”

This is the force of the word, “since ye *were* co-raised with Christ.” We were co-raised through an union with Christ imparting the virtue of His Resurrection, through a new life which He hath given. And to what end? The Apostle says, that

<sup>e</sup> S. John i. 12.

<sup>f</sup> Rom. viii. 17.

having shared the Resurrection, we should share the Life of our risen Lord; that having received power, we should use it; that we should walk in the newness of life to which He raised us from our decay and death, remaining ever conformed to His life, of Whose life we have been made partakers; seeking evermore the things above, where Christ, our risen Lord, sitteth at the right hand of God. We have been made members of Him Who is above. Our life is not here, since He Who is our Life is not here, but above. Our life is not here, since that which is seen, our life in the flesh, is not our life: our life in the flesh were death, rather than life. Our life is above, the Apostle goes on to say, "hidden" with Him Who is our Life, "with Christ in God," and to be revealed in glory at His coming. "When Christ Who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Then shall the saints of God appear and shine forth. Now they are hidden, hidden from the world, hidden from themselves; their hidden life is formed in them day by day; it grows they know not how or how much, through obedience to God's holy guiding, by simple performance of duty, simple acts of self-denial.

But to what doth the Apostle call us, when he bids us "since we have been raised with Christ," to "seek the things which are above?" Wherein do they consist? How may we know whether we are thus living the life of those raised with Christ? How may we cherish it? The Apostle goes on to tell us. It is by putting aside the things which are from the earth, earthy, tending to the earth,



binding us to it, and seeking those things which are from above, heavenly graces, the good gifts which come down from Him, and which tend again upward to Him Who is above. It is by cherishing our love for Him, and of our brethren in Him, and weaning us from the love of all but Him. “*Mortify therefore* your members which are upon the earth:” not grosser sin only, but “all uncleanness, all passionate affections, evil desires, all covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, bad words, lying.” Put off all these, and on the other hand, “put on tender mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, as Christ forgave you; charity, the peace of God, thankfulness.” Plain and simple duties these, for which we need not go far, but which are made nigh to us, which meet us in our every-day path. They are duties which belong to us alike, whatever our outward lot be, whether rich or poor, honoured or despised, amid outward joys or sorrows, whether things in this world go what the world thinks well or what it deems ill. For as our life is hidden in Christ, so have we all an outward and an inward, a hidden life. Outwardly we seem busied for the most part about common things, eating our bread in the sweat of our brow, with mean employments, trivial duties, worthless tasks. Inwardly we are, or ought to be, studying how in all to please God, walking in His sight, doing them in His Presence, seeking to know how He would have them done. For so does Scripture describe the highest, most faithful performance of duty. “*g Enoch walked with*



God, and he was not, for God took him ;” “for,” the Apostle adds, “<sup>h</sup> he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Even so amid trivial things we may be, nay men are, in every station of life, pleasing God, that is, leading angels’ lives, in that they are doing His will on earth, as the angels in heaven; they are “<sup>i</sup> servants of His, doing His pleasure.” For to this end, among other ends, did our Redeemer, Who was God and Man, pass through our daily duties, our daily trials, that He might sanctify them, and we no longer think “common” what He had, by doing, “cleansed ;” that we might not think slightly of them, that we might see that in all we might act worthily of Him, that we might not be weary of them. He, in the form of a servant, hungered, that we might learn that even this common craving is hallowed, if we feel that “<sup>k</sup> man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” He took food, that we might learn to “<sup>l</sup> eat and drink to the glory of God.” He rested in sleep as well as watched, that we might learn to lie down in rest, reposing in God. He wept, that we might learn compassion. He sorrowed, that we might learn resignation in sorrow. He, as Man, was subject to the creature whom, as God, He had created, that we might learn the blessedness of simple child-like obedience. He worked with His hands, as though He had been what He was called, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” that we might learn not to be ashamed of whatsoever God has called us to.

Herein, then, is the difference of those who, hav-

<sup>h</sup> Heb. xi. 5.    <sup>i</sup> Ps. ciii. 21.    <sup>k</sup> S. Matt. iv. 4.    <sup>l</sup> 1 Cor. x. 31.

ing been made partakers of the Resurrection of their Lord, are indeed living the risen life, and of those who are again losing that life in the cares, and pleasures, and toils, and vanities of the world. Outwardly, they seem oftentimes to be doing the same things; but the one class are doing them to themselves, the other to God; the one are seeking to please themselves, the other to please God. The one is looking to this life, and what shall profit him for this life, and shall set him at ease, make him comfortable, prosperous, greater, secure him worldly advantages and worldly joys. The other is looking beyond this life, is using the things of this world as means to another, is content to forego earthly prosperity, ease, advancement, so he may "gain an eternal inheritance." The one sees things present only, the other gladly foregoes things present, that he may "so pass through things temporal" that he "finally," by God's mercy, "lose not the things eternal." The one acts as though this world were his home, the other as though he were a stranger passing through it to his unseen home, "eternal in the heavens."

And as in doing, so also in suffering. Suffer, through God's merciful discipline, Who leaves us not to the waywardness of our own hearts,—suffer we all must. But to those who are seeking the things of earth, suffering is a mere evil; by those who would seek the things above, it is often felt as the choicest gift their merciful Father's healing hand can give. For the end of our life is to learn to love our Creator alone, not for His gifts, but for Himself, as He Himself will be the object of

the love of those, whom His mercy fits to love Him with an eternal love. His creatures we should love, only as they are His, in Him, for Him. But the love of things on the earth creeps over us; we love them for that which is earthly also; we make idols of them, we give them the love which we owe to God only, even while we persuade ourselves that we love God in them. And so in His mercy He withdraws them, that we may know ourselves, and having earthly joys withdrawn, may learn to stay ourselves upon Him. They are withdrawn from our sight, that we may learn the less to value these things of sight, and love the things out of sight above with God Who is unseen. Faith sees then not as the world sees. They are not the happy, with whom all things go well, who "have their portion in this life, who have in this world their good things," who are "made rich, and the glory of whose house is increased;" who count themselves happy in this world, "and leave the rest of their substance unto their babes." "Blessed is the man," Scripture saith, "whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law, that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity<sup>m</sup>." Yea, "happy," Scripture saith again, "is the man whom God correcteth." This is the only test of good, or ill, whether it tend to fix our thoughts on this life, or to take us off from this life, and fix them upon God. So, what the world calls prosperity, happiness, honour, well-doing, are but, for the most part, dangerous trials; what it calls losses, ruin, disgrace, adversity, unhappiness,

<sup>m</sup> Ps. xcix. 12, 13.

are God's gracious gifts, weaning us from the world, and fixing us on the things above, where our life is, and on Him. What men count loss is a gift of our risen Saviour<sup>n</sup>, wrought by Jesus Christ as risen, and so pouring down His gifts. And so, though He undo, one by one, the links which bind us to this life, and make this world joyous (as He does, as we go on in life) we shall if we are wise, see them patiently unclasped one by one; the objects of our affections, our strength, our health, we shall resign them peacefully at His call; counting it the happy lot, not to have but to lose; to "sow in tears," if, by His mercy, we may at the last, "reap in joy." Yea, if we *are* wise, we shall pray Him oftentimes to "correct" us, though "in judgment, not in His anger," if it be His will so to heal us; to give us trouble here, that He may give us rest in Heaven.

And not so only, but we would of ourselves, if we *be* wise, part willingly with whatever we lawfully may, if we see that it binds us down to the things seen, and takes us off from things above. If they be lawful pleasures, we shall restrict ourselves; if honour, avoid it when we may; if reputation, we shall make ourselves lowly, and think upon our sins; if we are elated by what we have, we shall make ourselves poorer; if we are beset by love of gain, we shall be content to lose, we shall part with treasure here, that we may find it stored for us in Heaven.

And this was ever in the Ancient Church, a portion of their risen, their Easter life, their Easter joy,

<sup>n</sup> Nicole.



to diffuse the joy which God had thus bestowed upon themselves, upon those whom God had made in this world poor. It was a worthy proof of joy in their risen Lord, that they sought to relieve Him in His poor members. It was an excellent way of seeking things above, to give their treasures out of sight into His treasury, into His keeping; to put on, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, love, which is the bond of perfectness;" to love one another, as He had loved them, with a self-denying love. It made them love the things on the earth less, because they parted with the things on earth, to find them again in heaven. It made them love them less, because it made them love their Saviour more. It made them love their Saviour more, because it was a fulfilment of His commands, done through the grace of His Spirit, in the hope of His favour, in humble thankfulness for His Atoning love, in acknowledgment of their own unworthiness, and of His great and undeserved goodness to us miserable sinners.

Lazarus is at the door°. The time is short; year

- ° "Lazarus is at the gate, *thou know'st it not*—  
But walled about with blessings is thy lot—  
Nor ever dost thou see, nor hear, nor heed,  
Penury's stern family, from clouds of need  
Cowering and huddling 'neath the wintry cot.  
*Thou know'st it not*, thy Saviour is on earth,  
And thou may'st find Him in affliction's smile  
By the lorn widow's side, and the cold hearth  
Of earth-bow'd eld, and clothe Him in his poor.  
Oh haste, for time is on the wing, and while  
*Thou know'st it not*, thy Judge is at the door."

*Thoughts in past years. XI. Affluence.*



by year, Easter by Easter, bids us more loudly "seek those things which are above," where by God's mercy (if ever) ye must soon be. "*While we have time*, let us do good unto all men, specially unto them who are of the household of faith;" "the night cometh, when no man can work." Alas, in this wealthy city<sup>p</sup>, with its frightful contrasts of extreme luxury and extreme misery, and luxury and misery either way of thousands of everliving beings, who once were made brethren in Christ, yet in life are strangers and estranged, loathing and loathed by one another, there is not one work of piety or charity,—the building houses of God, relieving God's peculiar care, the fatherless and the widow, tending Christ in His sick members, guarding those frail but hallowed temples of the Holy Spirit, the baptized children of the poor, on which a hundred fold more energy, than now is, should not be employed, for which sacrifices a thousand fold should not be made. Alas, in this wealthy city, Lazarus lies neglected many thousand times. God in His mercy grant that in the Day of account there be not found in this congregation one Dives. But that there be not, great as His mercy is, we must learn more heedfully to seek Him here also, lest haply we miss Him. It shall not be needed to man's condemnation at the Great Day, that he refused Christ, when in His members He besought him. It will alas ! suffice, that he sought Him not, where He might be found, that He "was sick," and men thought not of Him, nor "visited Him."

But while ye, in this way, seek the things which are above, see that ye be consistent. See that your joy relax not your diligence, but quicken it. Watch over the sins, for which ye have humbled yourselves, and have confessed that ye have deserved to be humbled. It will not suffice to *have* humbled ourselves, unless thereby we have learnt to remain humble. The reward is to the persevering. Lose not, by relaxing, the treasures given by God to enduring self-denial and humiliation. As the weekly festival of the Resurrection mingled with the season of the Passion, and was a relief to us, so let the weekly fast of the Passion (as we are enabled) mingle with the joy of the Resurrection and chasten it. Now ye *have been* raised with Christ, and are in the midst of the festival of the Resurrection, and have been made partakers of the power of His Resurrection, and have been set on high in heavenly places: strive to live and remain with Him there; "it is good for us to be here;" practise the sacramental response of the universal Church in all ages, "Lift up your hearts;" keep not your eyes fixed on this earth, where ye are strangers, but look up towards your home. And above the starry heavens, yea above the glory of the stars, lies your home. There is your life, hid with God. Thither ascend with your risen Lord, and thence look down upon this petty spot of earth, and wonder how its passing cares, and pleasures, and pomps, and honours, and affections, could bind down to its nothingness your soul, which Christ came down to redeem, and rose again to set on high where Himself is. If ye cannot thus learn to despise it, think what it must be

to fall from such a height; how hopeless, how miserable !

This then should be the fruit of the sorrows of our Lent, this of our Easter joys; of Lent, to die to sin; of Easter, to live to righteousness: of Lent, to die to Satan; of Easter, to live to our risen Lord: of Lent, to mortify all vices in us; of Easter, to lift up our cleansed souls from earth to heaven, and seek the things above. Seek Him by doing things worthy of Him; seek Him by seeking Him out in His poor; seek Him by foregoing earthly enjoyments that we may have the more to bestow on Him from Whom we have all things; seek Him by studying to live to Him. Obey Him as a gracious Master, not distracted by anxiety about the things below when we have them not, or puffed up when we have them; caring not for what we have not, and parting, in due measure, with what we have. Study His gracious Countenance, as shown to us in His life below for us, and strive with your whole hearts to be conformed to your Redeemer, Who chose us out of this world, that we might be conformed to His image.

As yet we are "saved in hope" only; but on God's part all stands sure. Our first Resurrection which He has given us, in making us partakers of the Resurrection of His Son, is the pledge of that yet to come, if we be but in earnest. Look we then, while this our Easter-day lasts, to what glories we are called, what hopes are set before us, what it is to love God for ever, what it is to be loved by Him, to lay aside this sinful frail flesh, and be "made like unto His glorious Body, accord-

ing to that mighty working, whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself," to sin no more, but love Him with a whole heart. So bearing cheerfully the healthful crosses, which He graciously bestows upon us, laying aside the weight of our besetting sins, which clog us; parting with earth that we may gain Him, may we, by the virtue and merits of His Cross and Passion, be brought to the glories of His Resurrection, the Easter-Day of Eternity, when He, Who as on this day rose again to raise us in Himself, shall come again to finish His goodness to us, and to receive to Himself those that are His; that where He is, they may be also. Then ye shall find all your losses, gains; all your sorrows, joys; all your self-denials, heavenly treasures; all your crosses, gems in the jewelry of that heavenly crown, which He will bestow, not for our worthiness, but according to His own super-abundant mercy, whereby He pardons our unworthiness, Who died and was buried, and rose again for us, Jesus Christ our only Saviour, Who is at the right hand of the Father, One God, in the Unity of the Holy Ghost, Blessed for evermore. Amen.

## SERMON VIII.

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### VICTORY OVER THE WORLD.

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(PREACHED ON LOW SUNDAY.)

1. John v. 4.

*“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:  
and this is the victory that overcometh the world,  
even our faith.”*

AGAIN our Church, in the Epistle selected for to-day, exhorts us to plain practical duties. She assumes that we are in earnest, that we have watched by the Cross of our Lord, have borne our own after Him, that we have been buried in His burial, have risen with our risen Saviour; yet, knowing how apt we are to be satisfied with *having* felt, how men turn their very feelings from the communion with God to the service of Satan, she would give them a practical direction. She reminds us of our duty to overcome the world, while what calls itself “the world” is being over-come, and she would thus teach us to condense our feelings into action, that so our “Easter fires” may burn on with the warm steady glow of single-hearted duty and service, and not be like the crackling of thorns, unsubdued, short-lived, ineffectual.

In the portion, then of St. John’s Epistle thus .



selected, he hath, as his wont is, in brief, calm, simple words, set before us the end of our being here, victory over the world; the source of that victory, our "birth of God;" the means, our faith; the nature of that faith, a true confession of the Divinity of our crucified Lord; the nourishment of our faith and life, His Sacraments, the "water and blood" whereby He "cometh" to us, and attesteth His presence by His indwelling "Spirit;" as, a little before, he had given us a test whereby to know whether we love God, by whether we love our brethren, and contrariwise whether our love for our brethren was of Divine grace, by whether we steadily keep God's commandments. This he wearies not to repeat again and again, if by any means it may fix our unstable hearts.

As Christians, our lot is to be *in* the world, yet we are not to be *of* it. We are surrounded by the world, yet in Baptism we renounced it; we are in it, as strangers and pilgrims, not belonging to it, nor it to us, but passing through it, as travellers to our home. We are "not taken out of it," as our Lord prays not for His Disciples<sup>a</sup>, yet are "kept from the evil One." We pass through it, but are kept<sup>b</sup> or guarded against it<sup>c</sup>. Nay, we are to be *in* the world, as He was *in* the world<sup>d</sup>, but "not" to be "*of* the world," even as "He was not *of* the world<sup>e</sup>." We are to be crucified to the world, and the world to us<sup>f</sup>, in His Cross; we are to overcome it as He overcame it.

<sup>a</sup> S. John xvii. 15.

<sup>b</sup> S. Jude 1.

<sup>c</sup> 1 S. Pet. i. 5.

<sup>d</sup> 1 S. John iv. 17.

<sup>e</sup> S. John xvii. 14.

<sup>f</sup> Gal. vi. 14.

Yet we must have much to do with it. Our duties lie in it; we have to deal with it, to bear our parts in it, to use it and not abuse it, to conquer it. It is alien from us, but by faithfulness in that which is "Another's," we are to be fitted to have "that which is our own," the "true riches." It is an enemy, yet it is to be our servant; the scene of our temptation, but the witness of our victory. It passeth away, but it is our birth-place for eternity; it draweth down to hell, yet our way of using it is to prepare us for Heaven.

It must needs, then, much behove us to know what this thing is, which we are to have so much to do with and so little; which we are to have and not to love; which we are to be tempted with and not to yield to; to be surrounded with, and yet to keep aloof from as a stranger; which is to be spread around us, on the right hand and the left, beautiful, inviting, lovely to the eyes, a seeming resting-place, through which we are yet to hold our course on the narrow path, anxious only to pass through it safely, keeping our eye fixed beyond it, as we would escape the pitfalls, which open to the pit of perdition.

What then, is the world which we are to overcome? what is overcoming it? what the victory, whereby we overcome it?

The world, in Holy Scripture, is the creature as opposed to the Creator; it is what is fleeting, as opposed to Him Who Alone is abiding; it is what is weak, as opposed to Him Who Alone

hath might; it is what is dead, as opposed to Him Who Alone hath life; it is what is sinful, as separate from Him Who Alone is holy.

The "world" is everything short of God, when made a rival to God. There is, in truth, no being but One, that is, God. For God, as He is the source of all being, so He upholds all. All "live and move and <sup>g</sup>*have their being*" from Him; St. Paul says, not, "*had*" it only, but, "have" it; they did not receive it once for all, as a gift to be held hereafter independently of the Giver, but *have* it. In physical nature, alike, and in moral, all existence is perpetually flowing from the one source of all existence; "<sup>h</sup>My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." God worketh, but ever resteth; resteth, but ever worketh. Out of nothing, in the beginning He created the heaven and the earth; out of nothing, He still addeth to that which He has created, so that it shall grow, multiply, not out of any power inherent in itself, but because He addeth to what He made. "<sup>i</sup>He upholdeth all things by the word of His power." They subsist, because He still continueth to speak that word, whereby He called them into being at the first, "let them be," and they *were* and are. They grow and decay, because He giveth them increase or withdraweth it. When "<sup>k</sup>He breatheth into them, they live; when He taketh away their breath, they die;" yea, when He "shall let His breath go forth again," they shall be "remade," and the face of this our earth be renewed. The things which shall be

<sup>g</sup> Acts xvii. 28.

<sup>h</sup> S. John v. 17.

<sup>i</sup> Heb. i. 3.

<sup>k</sup> Ps. civ. 29. 30.

our food, grow, because He "provideth corn for the earth," and bringeth life out of death; they nourish us, because He giveth them power, not of themselves alone, but by the "word which proceedeth out of His mouth." We grow, because He addeth to our stature; we sleep, because He giveth us rest; we awake, by a daily resurrection from the dead, because He, morning by morning, "lighteneth our eyes that we sleep not in death." Lest in the creature which we see, we should forget the Creator Whom we do not see, and in the laws which He giveth to His creation, and which His creation (man only and evil spirits excepted) obey, forget Him Who giveth these laws, Holy Scripture speaketh continually of God's doings as ever present. He upholdeth, He giveth, He feedeth, He clotheth the grass; He giveth to the bare grain which we sow, a body, as it pleaseth Him, and to every seed his own body<sup>m</sup>. He giveth the increase. What abideth, continueth according to His ordinances<sup>n</sup>. All this He does that, whether things pass away, or continue, or are renewed, we may know that it is by and in Him that they are begun, continued, and have their end, from Whom they came forth. Every thing, from the highest Archangel to the worm, hath of itself nothing. All and each existeth through His will alone, from Whom it first had its existence. The life of each individual is *from* His life; nay, in all things capable thereof, we know that their life is His life *in* them. Because He lives, they live also. They live in the light of His

<sup>l</sup> Ps. xiii. 3.<sup>m</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 38.<sup>n</sup> Ps. cxix. 91.



countenance; they live, because they depend upon Him, and thereby are capable of receiving His life; as, when all corruption shall be severed off, and the end of this imperfect life shall be come, and His glory perfected, then shall God be "all in all," all things in all beings, or shall be the sole Life of all which liveth, destroying all death by being alone, in all, their Life.

Even in this life, as far as any one of us do live, we live in Him, and He is our life. "He that hath the Son, hath life;" the Son of God is Himself their life; they have life *in* them, because they have, through His indwelling Spirit, the Son *in* them. "He that believeth on Me," our gracious Lord saith, "*hath* everlasting life<sup>o</sup>." For (it follows) "I am that Bread of Life." By receiving that Bread of Life, we have Him dwelling in us; and when He dwelleth in us, we "have everlasting life" in us. And St. John, as he begins his Epistle with speaking of Him "the eternal Life Which was with the Father and was manifested unto us<sup>p</sup>," so he ends it, by declaring that "<sup>a</sup>we are *in* Him that is true, *in* His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." The eternal life, which was with God, appeared among us who were dead, that we, receiving Him, might live in Him, and He in us, and so we might have eternal life in us, because we have in us Him Who is eternal life.

Since, then, God is the life of every thing which liveth, in whatever degree anything be without God, separate from God, it is without life. It is

<sup>o</sup> S. John vi. 47, 48.

<sup>p</sup> 1 S. John i. 2.

<sup>a</sup> Ib. v. 20.



death, and not life. By depending upon God, hanging upon Him, cleaving to Him, doth every thing live; Angel and Archangel live by beholding His face; by turning away from Him, we turn from our life, and so must needs turn to death. We were made for Him, to live to Him, in Him, through Him. We were made to be lords over our own bodies, lords of this inferior creation. Man fell by loving what God had created rather than God; and now that we have been raised in Christ, our trial is, whether we will love God rather than what He hath created, and love what He hath created, in and for Him only.

The world, then, is every thing regarded as distinct from God, beside God. It matters not whether they be the things of sense or the things of the mind; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life; things without us, or things within. Nay, it matters not so far, whether they be the things most debased (which we have in common with the beasts which perish), or *humanly* the most exalted, the highest things of intellect; these too we have in common with the devils, and the Apostle classes together "the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life." It matters not thus far, whether they be the purest *human* affections, the highest *human* exertions, the noblest *human* ends; whether they be things of religion, in which men are seeking themselves and their own glory, or things of devils. If it be that they end in themselves, that they are set up as idols, that they bind down the mind to themselves, and withdraw it from God or

engross it, they are parts of "the world." It is "the world" in some form more gross or more refined, which is thus stealing away the heart from its one end, God. There are but two ways of being, a being in God, which is life, and a being out of God, which is the world and death: and that which is not in God, and leadeth not to Him, but away from Him, is of "the world" and of death, and tendeth to death. He hath said, "thou shalt have no other gods beside Me." It matters not, then, thus far, what we set up beside God, whether it be "all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them," or the meanest temptation to the most sordid soul, the "flesh pots of Egypt" or the miser's gain, if it be beside God, it is a falling from God, worshipping of the God of this world for the true God. He hath said, "thou shalt not make any graven image," and declares His judgment against all such as "set up their idols in their hearts." It matters not, then, thus far, whether the idols be of Nebuchadnezzar's gold, or of mire and clay; whether it be husband, or wife, or child, or appetite, or comfort, or self-enjoyment, or glory and this world's honour, or the praise of men even for faithful service in the things of our God; it is an idol, so soon as it is put in the place of God. It is first prized with Him, then beside Him; then to the exclusion of Him; then, (unless He snatch such an one out of the burning,) against Him.

I have said throughout, "it matters not *thus far*"; because though every thing which draws people for

\* Ezek. xiv. 4.

the time down to itself, is for the time an idol, and belongeth to the world and is offensive to God ; yet hath He compassion upon us. Though all is sinful, yet all is not equally sinful ; all is to be striven against, yet all doth not equally bind captive ; all ensnareth, yet all is not wilful ; all is a rival to God, yet doth not all (God forbid) equally extinguish or diminish the love of God, and His life in us. Some sins are done with a high hand, and all but extinguish life at once ; some are the rust, which, through human frailty and for want of watchfulness, creeps slowly over the fine gold and dims it, so that God casts it into the fire of affliction, that it be not spoiled ; some are the stains, which cleave to good men well-nigh to the end, the weakness entailed perhaps by former sins, from which, amid tears for past and present failings, they are striving to be freed.

Such being the world, the love of any thing out of God, instead of God, the having any end of our life but God, what is victory over the world ? Plainly, it is not victory over the one or other thing, while in others people are led captive. It is not soundness in one part, while another is diseased. It is not the breaking down of the images of Baal and Ashtaroth and the sun, or even the calves at Bethel and at Dan, while the "high places" are left. It is not halting, uneven service, one limb free, while another is chained ; one, whole and capable of motion, while another is stricken with the palsy. It is not to cultivate one or other grace which may be easier to us, leaving undone or imperfect, what *to us* may be more difficult. It is, to

count the cost, to love nothing out of God, or instead of God or beside God; it is to have no end but Him; to be willing to part with every thing but Him; to desire to gain nothing but Him; to be content (with St. Paul and under his feet,) to "count all things but dung that we may win Christ," and with St. Paul too, to "suffer the loss of all" beside; it is to watch ourselves, and "pluck out our right eye, if it cause us to offend," if so be we may "enter into life; it is to take it humbly and penitently, if it please God that "the sight of our eyes, it also shall go from" us. It is, to cut off, as far as we may, every hold which every thing out of God has over us; to study wherein we are weak, and there seek in His strength to be made strong. Be your temptation the love of pleasure, it is to forego it; if of food, to restrain it, as well by fasting as by habitual self-denial; if of praise, to put forward others rather than yourself; if of being right in the sight of men, be content to be misjudged, and to keep silence; if of being listened to, keep silence, while others, inferior if so be, interrupt; if of taking the first place, take the last; if of self-indulgence, use hardness; if of display, cut off the occasions, and give to the poor; if of heaping around thee things pleasant to the eye, part with them; if of having thine own will, practise the submission of it to the wills of others. Consider not what by God's grace may be good in thee, but study what through thine own negligence may be lacking to thee, what defects may have been stealing over thee, what thorns may have grown up with thy good seed, and strive, as one who hath



a weighty work, a short time, and "the night coming when no man can work."

And this struggle must be not for a time only, but perseveringly ; not in one way, but in all ways ; not in one sort of trials, but in all : whatever temptations God permit Satan to prepare for us, whatever trials He Himself bring upon us. It avails not to be patient in sorrow or sickness, if we become careless when it is withdrawn ; to be humble to men, if we become self-satisfied with our humility ; to overcome indolence, if we forget God in our activity ; to be busied, even with Martha, in serving our Lord, if we forget thereby to sit at His feet and hear His words. It is a daily struggle wherein we are engaged ; a struggle for life and death, for life and death eternal. Our enemy is subtler than we, has access to us on every side, sees where we are unguarded or off our guard, and thrusts at us there ; he is quick in changing his ground, if he find us prepared ; he leaves us even for a while, if so he may afterwards surprise us ; he suits his temptations to our different periods of life, our outward circumstances, our change of habits, our state of grace, and is ready to persuade us that we are conquerors, simply because he does not assault as he did before. Meanwhile he is perhaps employing a subtler snare, or dresses it in some different form ; he overpowers us by assaults, or by craft ensnares us. Our own hearts, all the while, are ready to betray us. The flesh is weak, and ready to yield to sin ; the world is enticing, and things unseen are faint, or not present to the mind ; our judgements are obscured and dulled by former sin, so that we



have no longer that instinctive insight into right and wrong, which God imparts to His most faithful children.

Alas! what is life, but as was said of old, "all trial?" "Is not the life of man upon earth all trial, without any interval?" Alas! who if he looked on the trial only, or looked on all of life and all its trials at once, or on himself and his own strength alone, would not faint and grow weary? Alas, who that is in earnest, does not often grow weary and faint-hearted, and would not be glad to lay down his life, and like the hireling, long for life's evening, to end this struggle and be at rest, were he sure of being then owned as one even of the hired servants, even of the least and last of the hired servants, in the house where he was born a son.

Such were life in itself; such to us, if left to ourselves: but God be thanked, we are not left to ourselves, to perish. "Greater is He that is *in* us, than he that is in the world." We are not only the frail creatures, which we seem, flesh and blood, but we are spirit, through the indwelling Spirit. We have been born, not only of the earth, earthly, but "from above," by a heavenly birth, of God. And so, since we are born of God, we are stronger than the world, and the things of the world, and the god of this world. Being born of God, we must needs be, (if we use the strength given us) stronger than the world and its temptations. He, our Master, saith, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." He hath overcome it *for* us, by His unsinning obedience; He hath overcome it *for*

us, by vanquishing in our nature our enemy, its god and the master to whom we had sold ourselves; henceforth He will overcome it also *in* ourselves; He hath made us members of Himself, Who hath overcome the world; and as He overcame it, so will He give us, whom He hath made His members, power to triumph over it, and to share His triumph; He hath bound the strong man, and has set us his "lawful prisoners" free.

This then is "the victory which overcometh the world, our faith," which seeth things invisible, which looks beyond the world, to Him Who hath overcome the world, looks to Him as the Son of God, Who for us men and for our salvation became Man. We must beware, not only that we are in earnest striving, but striving with the right faith, that is, with the faith in which we were baptised, the faith in the Holy and Undivided Trinity. The sad, and for what we see, unrecovered falls of men, once esteemed in the Church, attest, that in faith as in practice, "narrow is the way which leadeth unto life." He who believeth not in the Son of God, as He hath declared Himself, how shall he have the victory, when he hath not the right armour? How shall he have victory, when, the Apostle says, "he hath not life?" And to this there is the more need that we should take heed in these last days, when men have taken upon themselves to decide what is saving truth, otherwise than the Church Catholic ever taught; when they will make such portion of the truth as they think calculated to affect the heart, alone sufficient, instead of "contending earnestly for the" whole "truth once com-

mitted to the saints." The experience of the whole Church shows that whoso tampereth with the faith, knoweth not to what he may be abandoned. Whoso parteth but a little, as he thinketh, from the unity of the Faith, or of Christ's Body, in the end (it is too often to be feared,) wholly departeth.

And they who confess this faith in the Son of God (St. John goes on to say) must cleave to Him (as so many of you do, and we trust more and more will do,) in His Sacraments. "This is He that cometh by water and Blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and Blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth," i. e., He Who poured out of His most precious Side water and Blood, still cometh to us, unseen, through the water of Baptism, whereby He washed us, and the Blood of our Redemption, wherewith He refreshes us, out of His wounded Side, wherein we hope He will hide us, and the Spirit whereby He sanctifieth us, and cleanseth us for His indwelling, and in cleansing, dwelleth. By these He cometh, and these are the witnesses of His coming. These are the assurances of His favour and goodness, whereby He gives us the hope, that we who, we trust, although altogether unworthy, do "duly partake of these holy mysteries, are very members incorporate in the mystical body of the Son of God." These are "the pledges of His love, to our great and endless comfort."

Such then being our strife, and such our armour, it remains that we "neither cast away our confidence in God, nor place it any where but in

<sup>t</sup> 1 S. John v. 6.

God," that we neither despond because the strife is sharp nor think to escape without its sharpness. If we are in earnest, we shall find that we have much to do. But we shall find also, on each occasion, strength proportionate to our day. We have to subdue the world around us, by patience and meekness, winning out of it whom we can, by a holy and simple conversation. The world within us we must subdue by watchfulness, prayer, self-denial, repentance, humiliation. We must take heed to what we know, and seek to know more, in order to do it. The world has too much mingled with the Church, and corrupted her, while it borrowed something of her; and so those who would be the true soldiers of the Cross, have much need to look not only to their actions, but to their very maxims of right and wrong; not to their duty only, but to their very standard and measure of duty, lest in what they deem to be overcoming the world, they be really using the world's standard, instead of the rules of the Gospel, or Evangelical obedience;—lest they substitute the traditions of men, human maxims, carnal rules, compromising obedience, earthly duties, for the pattern of their Master and only Saviour, Who died for us, that we might live to Him.

We may not be weary of saying, nor you of hearing, that, escaping as the Church is out of a relaxed and debased age, they who in earnest seek a heavenly crown, have need oftentimes to review their whole standard; lest what they deem lawful pleasures draw them down and rivet them on things of sense, or allowed gains be idolizing of mammon, or getting on in the world be a love of the world



which will shut out the love of the Father, or their peace with the world be that friendship with it, which is “<sup>u</sup>enmity with God.” We are surrounded on all sides with perilous things and heed them not, and forget them to be dangerous. We have wealth, and forget our Lord’s warnings on its perils; we have the worst sort of wealth, won by continual gaining, and fear not lest it should steal away our hearts; we are a luxurious people, and fear not lest we have learnt the “lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye,” and unlearnt the Cross; we have been boasting ourselves, and fear not the “pride of life;” we “heap up riches,” and fear not lest “<sup>v</sup>the rust of them shall be a witness against us, and eat up our flesh as it were fire;” we lay up treasure here, and fear not lest we should have none hereafter; we are pillowed up by our comforts which we multiply around us, while we forget the poor, and fear not lest He should disown us as *His* disciples Who, when on earth, was poor, and an hungered and homeless, and “<sup>w</sup>had not where to lay His head,” and is so now in His poor and sick members, whom we in our affluence neglect; we have all the things of the world and forget that “all that is in the world,—is not *of* the Father, but is *of* the world;” we are rich, and full, and laugh, and are wise in our own sight, and forget that on these is pronounced woe, and blessing on them who are poor, and hunger, and weep, and are as fools. Alas, compared with elder Christians, even the self-denying, for the most part, will find reason to be ashamed of their self-indulgence; the charitable, of

<sup>u</sup> S. James iv. 4.

<sup>v</sup> Ib. v. 3.

<sup>w</sup> S. Matt. viii. 20.



their penuriousness ; the simple, of their luxury ; they who pray, of the infrequency of their devotions ; the peaceable, of their censoriousness ; the patient, of their impatience of slight or wrong or injuries, or even of God's fatherly hand in privation and bereavement. Where is now the Gospel dread of "x speaking evil of dignities ?" Where the Gospel love which speaketh no ill of its neighbour ? Where the Gospel rule of "giving the cheek to the smiter ?" Where our Lord's rule that "y men ought always to pray and not to faint ?" Where the Gospel measure of self-denying, self-sacrificing charity ? Alas, what shallow maxims of the world have we allowed to creep around us, as though the accumulating money were the source of prosperity, or the employment of artizans in ministering to luxury and ease were the same in God's sight as foregoing ease and comfort (if it may be) to show mercy on His poor ; or as though our fictitious self-made station were to be upheld at the expense of charity, in *His* sight, Who forsook His glory with the Father, for our sakes to become poor ; or as though we might lawfully employ the services of man, like those of the beasts that perish, careless of the souls of those who minister to our comforts or our necessities. Alas, even of those who are in earnest, how few even propose it as an object to themselves, to give rather than to increase our substance, to cut off warily all needless occasion of expenditure, that they may give to their Lord in His sick ; to make Christ co-heir with their children, Whose co-heirs they hope their children, with themselves, may hereafter be.

x 2 S. Pet. ii. 10.

y S. Luke xviii. 1.

Much then is to be done every way, much to raise our whole standard, much more to raise ourselves to our standard and act consistently upon it and persevere in it; to guard alike against the wiles of Satan and the false maxims of the world, and the frailty of our own hearts; to keep alike the steadfastness of our practice and the rigidity of our faith, while the rules of both around us are carnal and lax.

But though much is to be done, none need faint. Whoso cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out. He Who putteth into the heart the first faint longing to overcome the world will mature it into ardent desire and effectual striving. He Who hath appointed thee thy task, willeth thy salvation, which He hath died to purchase. He will proportion it to thy strength, and His strength to the burthen which He lays upon thee. He will “strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees,” and “make straight paths for thy feet,” and gently lead thee by the way, and is Himself the Way. He Who led not His people, when fresh from the bondage of Egypt, by the straight way, lest they should “repent when they saw war, and return to Egypt,” will bring thee into no greater conflicts than He sees to be fitted for thee. Look not then onward at the length of the way, or the weariness of the conflict, or the hardness of the strife which thou mayest have hereafter, or the difficulty of perseverance. It is this looking onward along the earth and the things of earth, which makes a short way seem so long. Heaven, though far off, looks nearer to us, than the

<sup>2</sup> Is. xxxv. 3.

<sup>a</sup> Ex. xiii. 17.

horizon which bounds our view on earth. Look then up thither to Him Who dwelleth there, and to thy own next step thitherward, the next duty which God giveth thee to do. He Who fashioned thy "limbs day by day, when as yet there were none of them<sup>b</sup>," will form, day by day, the rude and imperfect substance of thy soul. He Who hath cared for thy body amid weakness and helplessness will provide for thy soul also. He Who worketh as He wills, and maketh the seed grow thou knowest not how and seest not, will, thou knowest not how, ripen the seed which He hath sown in thy heart, and leaven thee by the secret workings of His good Spirit. Thou mayest not see the change thyself, but He will gradually change thee, and make thee another man. Only yield thyself to His moulding hand, as clay to the potter, having no wishes of thy own, but seeking in sincerity, however faint, to have His will fulfilled in thee, and He will teach thee what to pray for, and will give thee what He teacheth thee. He will retrace His own image on thee line by line, effacing by His grace and gracious discipline the marks and spots of sin which have defaced it, until, having stamped anew upon thee, by the gradual transforming power of His Spirit, that likeness in which He created and recreated thee, at the awful day, He shall recognize the work of His own hands, and have mercy upon it. Then thou who hast sought to bear His likeness here, shalt for ever bear the image of the Heavenly; thou who hast sought, though faintly and amid manifold infirmities, to live to God here, shalt

<sup>b</sup> Ps. cxxxix. 16.

live with Him for ever, singing praises to Him Who out of nothing created thee, when worse than nothing, redeemed thee; Who took thee out of the world by thy Baptism; Who when thou wert falling back to the nothingness and deadness of the world, renewed thee, softened thee by His tender mercy, waited patiently for thee to turn to Him, purged away thy dross by thy sufferings which He mercifully laid upon thee, plucked thee as a brand out of the flames wherein this lost world shall be burned up, that being "not of the world, even as He is not of the world," thou mightest not have thy portion with the world, but with Him Who overcame it for thee, and will overcome it in thee.

• S. John xvii. 16.

## SERMON IX.

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### OBEDIENCE THE CONDITION OF KNOWING THE TRUTH.

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(PREACHED ON ST. MARK'S DAY.)

Rom. xii. 2.

*“Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

THE festivals of the blessed Evangelists and Apostles of our Lord are so ordained in our Church, as not only to be days of thanksgiving for the mercies vouchsafed to us through them, but also to convey lessons of duty to us. That of this day is, in what way we, who in God's holy Church have been instructed in “the heavenly doctrine of His Evangelist St. Mark,” may not be “carried about with every wind of doctrine,” but “may be established in the truth of Christ's holy Gospel;” how we may follow, in our measure, the firmness and steadfastness of this blessed Saint, who, having by his preaching, his life, his labours, the miracles wrought by his hands, planted the Gospel widely and deeply, yielding fruits of a strict holiness, at last, in this our Easter-season, “resisted unto blood, striving against



sin," yielded his body to be mangled by the enemies of the Cross, his spirit to join the white-robed army of Martyrs, evermore to praise his Lord.

And yet St. Mark was naturally unsteadfast<sup>a</sup>. It is thought that he records against himself, that he was the young man<sup>b</sup>, who, when his Lord was taken, "fled away naked." Again, when Paul and Barnabas were "separated for the work," he shrank back in time of difficulty, and "went not with them to the work." Yet, at last, he was fitted by God for more than ordinary difficulties; he preached the Gospel amid tribes the most savage, founded the Church of Alexandria, of all the strictest, and so the most resolute also in maintaining the faith, and yielded his life in a bold resistance to sin by a lingering martyrdom; an encouragement to us, that however weak or irresolute we may by nature be, our Saviour's strength may be perfected in our weakness, and we too may be fitted to bear our Saviour's Cross, and follow Him.

This lesson of steadfastness is of much moment in these days, in which there is so much conflicting opinion, and persons are tempted to leave the Church, wherein they were made "children of God and members of" their Saviour, some in one direction, some in another; and even within the Church, people are at times distracted, which of the opinions they hear of is the truth, which practice they are to follow, and others make a plea of this difference to be indifferent to all.

In the Epistle for the day, one primary condition

<sup>a</sup> See Newman's *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii. "Religious Cowardice."

<sup>b</sup> S. Mark xiv. 51.

is given, that we seek the truth in the Church which God founded, and as He founded it. "He" (i. e., our ascended Lord, Who from the right hand of God shed down His gifts upon men) "gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;" i. e., He formed a Church with a regular ministry, some ordinary, some extraordinary, that in it those whom in it He hath called to be saints, might be gradually trained up unto perfection, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying" or building up "of the body of Christ," until the whole were perfected.

And in this Church, the Apostle speaks of one great means of abiding in the truth, "the unity of the faith," i. e., that "one faith" which he elsewhere unites with the "one Baptism," that "one faith" in the Holy and Ever-Blessed Trinity, which was confessed in our names, when we were baptized into Their saving Name; which we confessed with our own lips, when in Confirmation we were received into the full privileges of Christians, and in whose Name we were then anew blessed, and in which we hope to die; our belief in the Holy Trinity, as contained in the Apostles' Creed, being proposed to us in the solemn service for the Visitation of the Sick, as that whereby we "may know whether we believe as a Christian should or no."

Thus far we have ground only for praising God, that He has, in His great mercy, assigned us our happy lot in an Apostolic Church, whose Bishops

have received their commission through a long unbroken line from the "Apostles" whom "He gave;" and that in this Church the pure faith is confessed as He delivered it, neither adding to it, nor taking from it.

Thus far all is well, for all is God's mercy. It still remains to ask, how is it with us individually? Do we, as matter of course, understand our Bibles, because we read or hear them? Do we ourselves, of course, know the will of God, because it has been made known to us? Because we have been all called to the knowledge of the truth, do we therefore all know it? Because the Church has the truth, have all its members?

To judge from people's way of speaking, it would seem as if this were so; as if it were an easy thing to know God's will, and knowing it, to do it; only they speak differently at different times, and contradict themselves. Thus, when it is the question about giving account of themselves to God, nothing is more common among the poorer than to hold themselves excused, because they "are not learned," as though the reason why they fell short of doing God's commands, was only that they did not know them; and as if, had they known them, they would have done them. With these it is thought a hard thing to know God's will. And yet on inquiring more closely one finds they do know all saving truth, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and all which They have wrought and do work for man's salvation; the Commandments, and what is comprised therein. They do know (and, blessed be God! it

<sup>d</sup> Is. xxix. 12.

is "revealed unto babes") "what they must believe and do for their soul's health." But, again, it would seem, from others, as though it were easy to know the truth, and whatever is not easily known to be such, is not such. The Bible, they allege, is a book which "whoso runneth" may "read;" to doubt of it, is to take away from the dignity of God's Word; and so, if any one does not readily perceive any truth or duty in Holy Scripture, these forthwith decide that it is not there. If, for instance, they are told about fasting, or self-denying charity, or the duty of cleaving to the Church; or, in cases of sadder error, of the truths of the Athanasian Creed, or even of the Divinity of "the Great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ," they do not believe them, because they do not find them plain to *them*. Take again the variety of ways of thinking and acting among persons calling themselves after "One Lord;" how people not only believe not the high mysteries of the Faith, but even the plainest rules of common duty; how impossible it is to persuade some not only to act up to their duty, but even to see things to be a duty or a sin, which are yet on the very face of God's word; how impossible, for instance, to convince many that it is a sin to return unkind angry words, though our Lord commands us, "bless them which curse you," and by His Apostle, not to "render railing for railing." Is there no one truth? Is there no one will of God? Is it alike whether a person belong to the Church or forsake it; whether he fast or fast not; whether he give alms liberally or withhold them; whether he



be baptized or unbaptized; whether he be meek and peaceable, or cast back angry words, so he be persuaded in his own mind? or how come people to act thus differently?

Holy Scripture, many ways, tells us that the light does indeed shine abundantly around all, but is seen by those only who have eyes to see; that a certain character of piety, and duty, and love, and humility, towards God and man, is necessary to enable us to see; that they who have not this, though they think they see, are blind, nay are the more blind, because they say, "we see;" that God revealed His wisdom unto babes, but hides it from the "wise and prudent." It has been observed, that no one text of the Old Testament is more frequently brought before us in the New, than that solemn one which speaks of persons "f hearing but understanding not, seeing but perceiving not."

"The secret of the Lord," says the Psalmist<sup>g</sup>, "is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." His covenant was with all Israel; all were His people; but the veil was upon their hearts, and they saw not into it; they had but the shadow, not the substance; it was still a secret thing, imparted to those who feared God, as from a Friend to His friends. It was a secret hidden intercourse, which they who feared not God knew not of.

"<sup>h</sup>If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." Whoso would do the will of the Father, should be able to judge of the doctrine of the Ever-Blessed Son Himself, whether it

<sup>f</sup> Is. vi. 9.

<sup>g</sup> Ps. xxv. 14.

<sup>h</sup> S. John vii. 17.



came from the Father. These by obedience to the Father should be brought into unison with His thoughts and will, in a degree after the pattern of the Son Himself. Yea, being by obedience true, though imperfect sons, they should understand the words which the Father spake by the Son, and should recognise them as the Father's voice. For the Father Himself should make Himself known to such. "I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." This is the hidden voice, which our Lord says His sheep shall hear in the way of obedience, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." He first knoweth His sheep, and maketh Himself known to them; and they hear His voice, and follow Him, and learn to distinguish His voice even in its lower indistincter tones, as a man knows the whisper of a friend. And hence, in God's own language of the Old Testament, the same word signifies to hear, to hearken, and to obey. They only really hear who obey, and they only who obey can really hear. This is the promise of the new covenant, "they shall all know Me, from the least unto the greatest of them;" for (there went before) "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts<sup>1</sup>." This is the way in which our eyes shall see our teachers, "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." This is the hidden

<sup>i</sup> S. Matt. xi. 25 26.    <sup>k</sup> S. John x. 27.    <sup>l</sup> Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

<sup>m</sup> Is. xxx. 21.

wisdom, and strength, and nourishment, and privilege, given to "him that overcometh." "To him that overcometh<sup>n</sup>," our Lord says, "will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new Name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it."

And on the other hand, in those sad cases in which persons become blinded to the will or truth or ways of God, by disobedience, by preferring the creature to the Creator, they dull the eye of faith. By not seeing, they cease to be able to see. By not hearkening, they lose the power to hear. By making their heart gross, they lose the capacity to understand. For, which is the worst of all, by these refusals to hear, and see, and understand, they gradually grieve away the good and tender Spirit of God, Which "will not alway strive with man," and by Which alone can any see, or hearken, or perceive.

"The natural man," i. e., one who has a soul, endued only with the natural powers of the reasoning soul, but not with the Spirit of God, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither *can* he know them because they are spiritually discerned;" i. e., things of God, being a Spirit, are seen only by the Spirit, "for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep, things of God." He then who hath not the Spirit, either not having had Him, as the heathen, or having grieved Him away, as the unfaithful Christian, as long as he is such, *cannot* know them. He has no capacity to receive or contain them.

<sup>n</sup> Rev. ii. 17.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Ib. 10.

Again our Lord says to the unbelieving Jews, “<sup>a</sup>Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word.” And He subjoins why; “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” They were bent on pursuing those desires inspired into them by their father, the devil, and so the words of God sounded by their ears, but they *could* not hear them. And again, “How *can* ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and not the praise which cometh of God only<sup>r</sup>?” Our Lord, in His former words, seemed to marvel at their unbelief; yet the source of His loving surprise was, that they should be such; not, that being such, they could not believe. On the contrary, it were strange that they could hope to believe. They thought to believe, if they had the “sign from heaven,” as modern unbelievers have asked for the tokens of God’s will to be written in the sun. They thought to follow God (as so many now do,) if they did but see His will, and our Lord warns them and us that the fault was in themselves; that while they remained such, they could not believe. “How *can* ye believe?” It is impossible. Whoso believeth in God, must believe in Him only, trust in Him only, seek their all from Him, lay up their all with Him. They, whose life, whose thoughts, whose hopes, whose rewards are here, in the praise of men, how should they believe in the unseen God, and an unseen reward?

And so St. Paul, when recounting those frightful sins to which the heathen world was abandoned, premises, in each stage of their decay, that they

<sup>a</sup> S. John viii. 43, 44.

<sup>r</sup> Ib. v. 44.

did not act up to the knowledge which they had. “<sup>s</sup>Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful,” and therefore “was their foolish heart darkened.” They “professed to be wise” (without God), and therefore “they became fools.” “They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into images like the corruptible” creature, “*wherefore* God gave them over to uncleanness. “As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to an undistinguishing mind.” In each case, sin was a rejection of God; in each, God, Whom they had rejected, withdrew Himself from them, until, in His final abandonment, He left them to their own undistinguishing mind, without any light in them, since they were without Him, the True Light. At last contrary to their natural conscience, which condemned the sin as “worthy of death,” they not only had pleasure in the sin, but in its very commission, apart from its pleasure. And so he says in another place<sup>t</sup>, they “had the understanding darkened, in that they were estranged from the life of God,—because of the blindness of their heart, having given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” The heart was first blinded by passion and sin, and then the understanding became darkened.

In like way, it is prophesied of a falling away among Christians in the last days, that some should “depart from the faith,—having their conscience seared with a hot iron<sup>u</sup>.” Their moral sense will first be deadened by sin, and so they will fall

<sup>s</sup> Rom. i. 21.    <sup>t</sup> Eph. iv. 18, 19.    <sup>u</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.



away. St. John says<sup>v</sup>, "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us." They were carried away by the wind of false doctrine out of the barn-floor, because there was no soundness, no stability, in them; they were not wheat, but chaff. Anti-Christ shall with "lying wonders<sup>w</sup>," work "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, *because* they received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." All unrighteousness is a lie, a lie in itself, as unreal, a lie against God as the Truth; and so, as the just punishment of loving a lie, God turneth them into it.

And, as in the fall, so in the recovery. Throughout prophecy, the restoration of light and holiness are promised together. St. Paul's commission to the Gentiles was "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

Yet was "the Gospel hid to them who were lost, in whom the god of this world had blinded the minds;—lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them." Their minds had first been blinded by the misty love of this present world; and in these earth-born clouds they had so closed themselves around, that the light of the Gospel, which would have shone unto them, could not; the light was there, but not to them; "it shined in darkness, but the darkness admitted it not."

Or, again, in those fearful cases of judicial blindness, which God has recorded as tokens and way-

<sup>v</sup> 1 S. John ii. 19.

<sup>w</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.



marks, lest we tread in their steps. Pharaoh hardening his heart by disobeying God; God Himself hardened it afterwards, so that he saw not (what his servants saw) that Egypt was destroyed; he saw not the folly of pursuing those whom he had entreated to be gone<sup>x</sup>: the very miracle of the waters of the Red Sea parting, and standing on either side as a heap, opened not his eyes: he saw not, until he was himself in the midst of the sea, that the Lord fought for Israel. The chief priests and Pharisees blinded themselves by their hypocrisy, so that, though they saw and felt the miracles, and "could not deny" them, they could not believe; but shedding their Redeemer's Blood, brought on themselves the earthly destruction, which they thought, by shedding it, to avoid. Covetousness blinded the eyes of Judas, so that he saw not what even the Pharisees saw, that he was "betraying the innocent blood," and that it would be shed.

People will readily admit all this in the main, of such as Pharaoh, as the Scribes and Pharisees, as Judas, or the betrayers and murderers of the Just One Whom we worship. In these cases Holy Scripture has lifted the veil off the histories, and has laid bare to us, not what we see on the surface, men acting in a certain way for a certain end, and compassing it with worldly wisdom, men wise in their generation, and whose own end we do not yet see. It shows us things as God sees them, the hidden springs of their actions and the misery of their end, the blindness of their long-

<sup>x</sup> Wisd. xix. 3.

sightedness, and the folly of their wisdom, because they were wise only about this world of sight, and foolish about the things of eternity. We see them, not only as they at the time seemed, had in reputation of all the people, obtaining the praise of men which they sought. We see them more as we shall see all things in us and around us, at the Day of Judgement; as having had their reward, and so having to look only for the wrath of God; as having opposed God, and so to be rejected by God; as being guilty of that Blood, through which alone can we be cleansed from all guilt. And so because Scripture has laid bare what is commonly hidden, too often even in ourselves from ourselves, people come to think of those whom it speaks of, as other men, instead of being ensamples of us and warnings to us; men like ourselves, to whom we, whether we are in the way to obtain blessing or misery, whether growing in holiness or unholiness, obeying or disobedient, cherishing the life of God in us or becoming estranged from it, seeking our portion in this world or the next, the praise of God or of man, Heaven or hell, are like.

But the things remain the same, our nature and natural temptations remain the same. The things which blinded them were common every-day things, around us still; the love of man's praise; the fear of man's blame; thinking of man's judgement rather than of God's; the love of the things of this world; covetousness.

If then the love of man's praise hindered men from believing then, can they who now love it, feel confident that they believe aright? If the love of

gifts blinded the eyes of Balaam then, will people now be able to see, who, like him, love "the wages of unrighteousness?" If the god of this world, the love of this world, its pomps, its vanities, its lusts, hindered the light of the glorious Gospel from shining into men's hearts then, will they admit it now? Or did people lose their everlasting salvation then, through things which we may give way to and yet be saved? Is there no world, no pomps and vanities, which we have renounced, and yet which are everywhere around us, which we are tempted to, which people give way to or resist, and by yielding to they are blinded, and being blinded, yield to yet further, and go more and more astray, and perish?

Yet they see it not! Nor did those, of whom Scripture speaks. And this is the very misery and hopelessness of their case. "If ye were blind," saith our Lord, "ye should not have sin; but now ye say, 'we see;' therefore your sin remaineth." It is the very misery of such cases, that people go on as in a dream, seeing, speaking, acting, having their enjoyments or their sufferings, succeeding or being baffled, but it is all the while unreal. "They walk in a vain shadow," and mistake all the while the shadow for the substance; and that which alone is substantial, the things which shall continue for ever, are to them but as a dream. They are asleep to their real life, taken up with their dream, as if it were their life and their end, losing the time in which they might have done what really concerned them. When they awake, as men do after a toil-

some feverish dream, exhausted and wearied, where is all, about which they have thus toiled, toiled often as men do whether waking or sleeping, half-conscious that it is vanity? Where are they? Where will men be, if they wake but at the end or after the close of this life? "As a dream when one awaketh, so in the awakening," [i. e., at the Resurrection,] "shalt Thou, O Lord, despise their image<sup>a</sup>;" because they have borne only the image of the earthy, and not been conformed on earth to His Image in which they were re-born, the image of the Heavenly. "It is even as when the hungry dreameth, and behold he eateth, but he awaketh, and his soul is empty<sup>a</sup>." Such have fed all their life long on husks or ashes, not on "the Bread of Life, which giveth life to the world." They awake and their soul is empty; empty of His Life which they received not; empty of His Spirit which they grieved away; empty of goodness, which without Him they could not have; empty of treasure, which they "laid up in this life, and were not rich toward God;" empty of offerings to God, and so they now "appear before God empty<sup>b</sup>;" and, as empty, cannot abide. They are "chaff, which the wind driveth away<sup>c</sup>," as it followeth in the same Psalm, "therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the Judgement<sup>d</sup>." "The rich man lift up his eyes being in torments." They had been closed then before, as in sleep; they had been fixed on the earth, while he was "clothed in purple and fine linen, and far-

<sup>a</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 20.

<sup>a</sup> Is. xxix. 8.

<sup>b</sup> Exod. xxiii. 15. xxxiv. 20. Deut. xvi. 16.

<sup>c</sup> Ps. i. 4.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. ver. 5.



ing sumptuously every day," so that he could not lift them up to God above, or see the end of his life, or Him Whom in Lazarus he might have relieved, and so he "lift them up," but "in torments!"

And yet they thought they saw! Dives thought that he had the only true substantial enjoyment, the riches and pleasures of this life. He saw Lazarus, it may be, full of sores, and turned away from him, as men do, with loathing. He saw all which could be seen in the world of sense; he only "saw Him" not, "Who is invisible." These things have a seeming substance, though not a real one, since they continue not. They fill man's empty soul; though it is but with wind, which puffs up and distresses, but satisfies not nor nourishes. They stop its cravings, like savages, with clay, and so "hungering" not, they cannot be "filled" with that "meat which endureth unto everlasting life." The rich man "said to his soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for thee for many years." It is men's misery, that they see too plainly the things of this life, their perishable enjoyments, ends, honours; and seeing these only, think these alone are to be seen. Yet they are not the less confident. The rich man was confident that he had chosen the happy part. With what awful confidence do the Jews say to our Lord, "<sup>e</sup> Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" "Now we *know* that Thou hast a devil." "<sup>f</sup> Behold, we have heard His blasphemy." "<sup>g</sup> For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy, and because

<sup>e</sup> S. John viii. 48, 52. <sup>f</sup> S. Matt. xxvi. 65. <sup>g</sup> S. John x. 33.



Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." They accuse the Son of blasphemy, because He declared Himself equal to the Father, with Whom He is One! They say, "He hath a devil," Who came to destroy the works of the devil! They condemn as guilty of death, Him before Whose Judgement-seat they must appear! And yet, (which is the most terrible,) they have no misgivings, no doubts. The very truths which they do hold, lead them the more into error. They believe the law, so solemnly delivered, which their fathers set at nought. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One Lord;" and therefore they reject our "One Lord," Who with the Father is "One God." They believe that the Messiah shall come in great glory, and so they reject Him when He cometh in great humility, that they may be rejected of Him, when He cometh in His glory. They neglected to seek Him, when He might have been found, where they taught others to seek Him, at Bethlehem, and so, knowing it not, they rejected His miracles, because He was also of Nazareth! They knew that "<sup>h</sup>His goings forth were of everlasting," and that "<sup>i</sup>of His kingdom there should be no end;" and therefore they rejected Him, because they "knew whence He was; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is<sup>k</sup>." "We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest Thou, the Son of Man must be lifted up? who is this Son of Man<sup>l</sup>?" Caiaphas even prophesied as high-priest, and declared the mystery "<sup>m</sup>that One

<sup>h</sup> Micah v. 2.<sup>i</sup> S. Luke i. 33.<sup>k</sup> S. John vii. 27.<sup>l</sup> Ib. xii. 34.<sup>m</sup> Ib. xi. 50. 48.

Man must die for the people, that the whole nation perish not ;” and understood his own words only in the carnal sense of the removal of our Lord, lest “the Romans should take away their place and nation.”

And yet what other than these Jews do they now, who, because our Lord is Man, deny that He is also our God, One God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and therewith “<sup>n</sup>deny the Lord Who bought them,” which is yet one chief plea for a deadly heresy sadly common among us? What else do they who, because the Holy Ghost is One with the Father, deny that He is, in the mysterious way of the Divine Existence, also distinct from the Father, and so deny the truth of the Holy Trinity, wherein we were baptized? What else, in their degree, do they who reject the Baptism with water, which our Lord ordained, because He promised that we should also be baptized with the Spirit? Or who deny that in His holy Supper He giveth us His Body and Blood, because what we see are His creatures, not Himself? What else do they who refuse obedience to the Church which our Lord bids us “hear,” because the Holy Ghost teacheth, that the “Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation?” Or they who, because Scripture declares that we are “justified by faith,” deny that we are justified through Baptism? Or they who deny that the Bishops receive their commission through the Apostles from our Lord, or that fasting is a duty, because they find other things spoken of more pro-

minently, even as the Jews found more of the glory of our Lord, than of His humiliation?

No, my Brethren! it is not whether we are ever so surely persuaded that what we hold is in the Holy Scriptures, upon which all depends, but whether it is there. It is not whether we share an error with many or few, or hold truth with the few or with many, but whether what we hold be the truth of God, or the invention and error of man. It is not whether what we do be "right in our own eyes" (for "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man," Scripture twice repeateth<sup>o</sup>, "but the ends thereof are the ways of death,") but whether it be right in the sight of God. It is not whether we "think we see," but whether we be "<sup>p</sup>walking in the light, as He is in the light," or "<sup>q</sup>walking in darkness, not knowing whither we are going, because darkness has blinded our eyes."

And for this, Scripture gives us but one rule, one test, one way of attaining it, i. e., whether we are keeping God's commandments or no, whether we are conformed to this world, or whether we are, by the renewing of our mind, being transformed into His image, Who died for us that we might live to Him. It is not what we believe; the devils also believe: it is not what we feel; this may be the morning dew which passeth away: it is not what we know; knowledge alone puffeth up: it is not even what we speak in His Name; some who prophesy in His Name He will bid depart, as workers of iniquity. That whereon all depends is, what, believing and knowing, we *do*; whether by patient continuance

<sup>o</sup> Prov. xiv. 12. xvi. 25.    <sup>p</sup> 1 S. John i. 7.    <sup>q</sup> Ib. ii. 11.

in well-doing, we are seeking to have His image retraced in us, and ourselves, through His renewing Spirit, day by day, are made less earthly and more heavenly. "Be not conformed," says the Apostle, "to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, *that* ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." The knowledge is not in our own power to attain. It is the gift of God, vouchsafed or withheld by Him, and each more or less according as man becomes conformed to the world and things earthly, or to God and things divine. It is in vain that men seek to obtain or to retain their belief in things divine, while they cleave to things of earth. "Whoredom (both spiritual and bodily, the idolatry of the flesh and that of spirit in loving aught besides God,) and wine, and new wine," saith the Prophet<sup>r</sup>, "take away the heart." It is in vain (though it is a sad sight) that people will even strive to retain a belief in high and holy things, while their life is wrong. They will strive to convince themselves, but it is in vain; they study, but it is of no use. They will even strive to work themselves up to believe them, strive to believe them, but they cannot. As their thoughts are more and more occupied with the world, holy truth becomes fainter and fainter, even while they regret it and wish to retain or recover it. They look back mournfully to the belief of their childhood, but cannot recal or retrace it. Our Lord says in the one and the same way, "*ye cannot serve God and mammon,*" and "*ye cannot believe,*" "*how can ye be-*

<sup>r</sup> Hosea iv. 11.



lieve?" He warns that we cannot believe both or serve both. Whom we serve, him we believe; whose wages men receive, to him they look, and he is their god. We cannot be serving the world and believing in God. It has been commonly observed, how worldly persons are wont to take up with low and carnal views of religion; how money-getting and Socinian heresy go together; how the easy, opulent, and self-satisfied take up with an easy religion and become victims to a deadly heresy, because, their thoughts being engrossed in the things of this world, they cannot raise them to Him, Who would be their Saviour, at the right hand of God! It is sadly common to see how people, who mean well in a way, and think well of themselves, leading moral but common-place lives, even get a dislike of any thing which is not such, any thing mysterious in doctrine, or self-denying in practice. It is even much to be feared, that many have no real belief in saving truth, who know not of it; that many are, unawares to themselves, Socinians. There have even been cases in which persons, while reading their Bibles, have drawn error from the source of truth. Deadly heresy has seemed to them the most natural, the most conformable to the Bible, because, while living worldly lives, merely human, they have lost the power of perceiving things Divine.

And as in doctrine, so in practice. There seems nothing so degraded, which man may not reconcile to himself, if he lose the life, and with it the light of God. Loss of natural affection<sup>s</sup> is one of the sins which St. Paul recounts in his heavy list. "† Even

<sup>s</sup> Rom. i. 31.

† Ps. cvi. 37.



their sons and their daughters have they sacrificed to devils." And even their sons and their daughters do parents still sacrifice to devils, tempting them often-times to sin, making their sin the instrument of their earthly comfort, educating them (in less gross cases) for the world, and so for Satan. And most of us can too sadly recollect a time (happy they to whom it was a very early time!) in which, though Christians, they lived to the world which they had in Baptism renounced, if by God's mercy not wholly, yet at least in part; they were serving Satan, while they thought they were serving God; or they were even careless about God, while they were hoping all the while to go to Heaven, i. e., to live with and to God for ever. Alas! most of us can too sadly recollect their having indulged in things unlawful and displeasing to God, without knowing them to be such. Why? but because "darkness had blinded our eyes," and one sin had dulled our sight to others, so that we no longer know or felt it to be sin. And as in sin, so in holiness. The fall is by disobedience, the restoration must be by obedience; the fall is by love of the world conforming us to it; the restoration must be by being drawn off from the world, so that we may be capable of being transformed unto God. Every act of charity, of parting with the world, of self-denying love of man, of obedience to God, of humility, of prayer, is so far a preparation to open our hearts again for His Presence, Who will "lead us into all truth," in faith, and in life. Our sight becomes gradually dimmer or clearer; we perceive less of sin or more

of duty. We cannot quicken our own sight; there is no way, whereby at once to increase our faith or knowledge of our duty. But if we be faithful and humble, God will enlarge our hearts, and open our eyes and cause the scales to fall off from them, and we shall at first see indistinctly, "men as trees walking;" and He will increase our faith by enabling us to obey more faithfully, and will strengthen our sight by enabling us to do what we now see. As in our daily walk we come nearer towards Heaven, He will open to us more of Heaven; we shall see less of the earth, and be less drawn to it, and more of Him, Whose Face His holy Angels ever behold, and Whom "the pure in heart shall see," and Whom they who purify their hearts here see, in proportion as they are purified. And so the vail which sin laid upon our sight being taken away, "<sup>u</sup>we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord," studying His Countenance, watching His looks, seeking to have His gracious and compassionate look cast upon us in the midst of our frailties and infirmities, we too may, like Moses, catch some faint reflections of Its brightness, and be changed into the Image whereon we gaze, which we love, which, in our weakness, we would long to copy and transfuse into ourselves: we too may be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The change is endless, to be carried on through life, ever beginning in this life; the rudiments and faint outline to be formed here, to be traced more fully and deeply in the endless gaze of eternity. To

<sup>u</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.

be conformed to this world is to be like the beasts which perish, or like the brutish among men. To be transformed, what is it but to be changed by the life-giving Spirit into the Form of Him Who is God; by His indwelling Spirit to be made like Him, as St. Paul again says, "that the new man is" in the course of "v being renewed after the Image of its Creator." Between these two extremes we must all be, either losing by sin our heavenly likeness, into the first mould of which we were cast in Holy Baptism, or by actual obedience tracing it deeper upon every action of our lives, every will of our hearts, every thought of our souls, and "w bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," until nothing rebel, and our whole bodies, souls, and spirits are presented, as the Apostle bids, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God;" all offered as a whole burnt-offering upon His altar, nothing kept back from Him, no desire, no longing after the world, but all offered to Him, to be consumed (if, for the sake of "the Lamb without blemish and without spot," He deign to accept our sin-bespotted sacrifices) to be consumed by the fire of His love.

And in each stage of this course heavenwards, we know not what is beyond us. We must, at the first, be contented to grope our way amid the blindness brought upon us by our past negligences and sins, often in perplexity even as to what our duty is, wishing to do it, but not knowing what it is, wishing to do what will best please God, but afraid lest we be mistaken; "walking in darkness, and having no" or faint "light." But let us hear the Prophet;

v Col. iii. 10.

w 2 Cor. x. 5.

“<sup>x</sup> Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His Servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God!” To the godly there shall rise up light in the darkness. The stars, as he gazes heavenwards, shall unfold themselves more and more to him; the day, which he longs for, shall at length dawn upon him; even thus his “path” shall “<sup>y</sup> shine more and more until the perfect day.”

Only in whatever stage we are, let us beware of judging or disputing about things or practices which we have not tried. It is one sore evil of the age in which we live, that it disputes about every thing, whether it understand it or no. Or rather it disputes against holy duties and practices, because, not having tried, it does not understand them, and so disputing, cannot understand them. The truth of God is a solemn thing, and to be treated reverently. For most of us, it is dangerous to speak even against error, lest with the tares we root up the wheat also, the truth with error; lest we injure our own minds by speaking in a common way of things which God hath hallowed. How much more, if what men ignorantly speak against be, after all, a part of the truth of God, and they be found “haply to fight against God.” God is a God of peace, not of confusion, and is to be sought not in eager debatings and strifes, but in the secret chambers of our own hearts. The promise that we “<sup>z</sup> shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God,” is to such as “do His will.” Let us earnestly set ourselves to act up to what we know, to

<sup>x</sup> Isa. i. 10.<sup>y</sup> Prov. iv. 18.<sup>z</sup> S. John vii. 17.



draw our affections off from this world, and set them upon Him; to be less concerned about this world's good, less desirous of its gains, honours, pleasures, ease. Let us practise ourselves in foregoing these things, see that we do each action of our lives as having God's eye upon us, and having to give account of each to God. Let us labour to do each act so, that we may offer each, our lying-down and our rising up, our daily bread and our daily task, our daily toil and our daily suffering and Cross, as an acceptable sacrifice to Him; and He will, at least after He has tried us for a while, make our way plain before us, and "a guide us by His counsel, and in the end receive us to His glory."

It is this, as we trust, increasing holiness in our Church which gives us good hopes that God's good Hand is with her, and that the distractions which at present harass her, will gradually give way, and we shall again "understand one another's speech," and speak "one language." It is when, individually, amid our manifold infirmities, we yet hope to have ground to trust that we are seeking "not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind," that we may hope also that we are in the way to "prove" and learn more deeply "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." It is thus that we, whose life is more advanced, may hope to be kept unto the end; thus, that the young may hope to be guided in these difficult days, "to know and believe what is for their souls' health."

Seek we then especially in this Easter season, to

<sup>a</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 24.



rise with our risen Lord, that we may ere its close with Him thither ascend, where He dwells at the right hand of God, preparing a place for us, and by the secret gifts of His Holy Spirit, preparing us for His Holy Place. Seek we with hearts fixed on Him and stayed by Him, not to conform ourselves to this world, not to act upon its maxims, not to be carried away by its sweeping tide, not to seek our joys in its joys, not to entangle ourselves with its cares, its pomps, its vanities, not to desire its praise, not to shrink from its reproach, but to fix our eyes on Him, Who as at this time rose from the grave and gate of death, that we having been raised from the death of sin, might live to Him, that we might fear nothing but His wrath, hope for nothing but His praise, grieve for nothing but what grieves Him, seek for nothing but to serve Him, and to be owned by Him as His in the Great day. So shall He shine more and more into our hearts, lighten our remaining darkness, give sight to our blindness, be Himself our Light and Life, until He bring us thither, where there is no night<sup>b</sup>, that heavenly Jerusalem, which "the glory of God doth lighten and the Lamb is the Light thereof, and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it." So shall we for ever "in His light see light," and ourselves be filled with the Light we see, and become light, freed from the darkness of sin and error and corruption, our spotted selves cleansed with His Blood, and all radiant with His glory and holiness and incorruption and truth; to which He of His infinite mercy bring us all, pardoning our defilements, and having pity on our misery.

<sup>b</sup> Rev. xxi. 25.

## SERMON X.

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### PRAY WITHOUT CEASING.

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Rom. xii. 12.

*“ Continuing instant in prayer.”*

SCARCELY any one, probably, can have studied the Bible ever so little attentively without observing that, taken in its plain meaning, it requires of him far more than he has been accustomed to think or to do. Even the duties which he has in a measure done, it requires him to do more fully, in a different way, and in a way which seems at first impossible. I speak not now of those higher attainments, of which our Lord says, “<sup>a</sup>he who can receive them let him receive them,” of a life of entire self-devotion to God, and forsaking every thing worldly, but of those which are enjoined on all Christians, as such. Such are those of the Sermon on the Mount, “love your enemies,” “do good to them that hate you,” “resist not evil,” “if any man will sue thee at law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” So again, “render not railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing;” “<sup>b</sup>whatever you do, do all to the glory

<sup>a</sup> S. Matt. xix. 12.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. x. 31.

of God;" and many others. The words are very plain; they can be understood but in one sense, if taken in their plain sense; yet in this sense, of ourselves, we should not like them: and so, for the most part, men get into the habit of treating them very disrespectfully. They either pass them by altogether and will not read them; or they *will* suppose that they are not to be taken so precisely, although they can find no other sense for them, or they *will* take them in the sense in which men around them are wont to take them. When they meet what is against their notions, or requires a service to them hard, they say, "this belongs to the first times of the Gospel," or "our Lord means that we are to form in ourselves such or such a disposition, not that we should do the particular acts." As if a disposition could be formed, which should never show itself in such like acts; or as if our Lord, for nothing, named particular acts, or as if the everlasting Gospel belonged to the few first years in which it was preached; or as if, should we neglect duties, as being duties of a period of affliction only, God may not bring upon us a period of sore affliction, to restore us to our duties!

. Now, even supposing the excuses made might have held in one or two passages, is it likely that they should in many? In other words, is it likely that when the Son of God condescended to come down among us, and to be our Teacher, He should teach very many such things as were soon to pass away, or is it not more likely that every word uttered by the Eternal Word, should have an eternal meaning? We know that in many cases

people of certain tempers of mind cannot see the truth, although those of a better sort, or who have kept faithfully to the Church's teaching, cannot understand how any can fail to see it. Some, who yet think themselves Christians, cannot see that our Lord is God, although to us who believe it, all Scripture is full of witness to His God-head. Others speak as if Holy Baptism were scantily mentioned in Holy Scripture, or in no very eminent way, while to us, who follow the teaching of our Church, the Old Testament speaks of it throughout in types and prophecy; the New every where sets it forth as the instrument of our salvation, whereby God makes us partakers of the Cross, Death, Burial, Resurrection of His Ever-blessed Son, yea, clothes us with Him. But so then, it may be with us, as to practical duties. Why should it not be likely that, here too, very much is to be taken more strictly or to the very letter, (unless indeed the Church has in any case always been instructed that any thing is not so to be taken), which people now-a-days commonly "come to, and look upon, and pass by on the other side," as though it concerned not them? Thus, when our Lord says, "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites;" this, men say, contains no instruction to fast. He says, "resist not evil;" men say, "yes, resist evil, but not in an evil spirit." He says, "if any man sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also:" men say again, "yes, defend thyself at law, or go to law to recover thy rights from others, only not in a litigious spirit, i. e., not in the spirit, which going to law brings



with it ;” and this, not only in what would seem extreme cases, but so that every evil is and ought to be resisted, every right ought to be pursued. He says, “give to him that asketh thee,” men say, now and then give a petty dole in so-called charity, but give not time, give not money, give not labour when it inconveniences yourself. Would men even think this a call upon them to sacrifice themselves, because another asked them? He says, “from him that would borrow of thee turn not away ;” and yet men turn away, not only in those cases in which we may clearly know, that to give would hurt him we give to, but they do not even think that to be asked is in itself a reason for giving, unless there is good ground for thinking it a duty to withhold,—a duty, not to ourselves or our families, but to him who asks us. God’s Word says, “turn not away,” that is, unless there be some plain reason in the case itself for turning away ; men say, “turn away,” unless there be, now and then, some overpowering reason why you should not. And yet there are those, we know, who act upon these rules, and when men’s eyes fall upon them on a sudden, or God has stirred their consciences, they cannot but feel that this is not as it should be ; that the words have a meaning ; that they are spoken to them ; that they require them to shake off their sluggishness, and the old habits, wherewith they are tied and bound, and arouse themselves, and do very differently. They cannot then but feel that in bearing any grudge, for instance, any unforgiveness to any one who has done them ever so much ill, they are doing contrary to what the Bible plainly



teaches to be their duty, and more, contrary to the way in which men like themselves have understood and have done, as St. Stephen, who prayed for his murderers *while* he was suffering from them. And yet since the Church has taught us to pray to follow his example she expects that we can. They feel then that God cannot have given them His Word for nothing, that “<sup>c</sup>by those words they shall be judged at the last day,” that their everlasting salvation may depend upon it.

What then is to be done? The one plain rule is to set about doing it. It is by doing our duty that we learn to do it. So long as men dispute whether or no a thing is their duty, they get never the nearer. Let them set ever so weakly about doing it, and the face of things alters. They find in themselves strength which they knew not of. Difficulties which it seemed to them they could not get over, disappear. For He accompanies it with the influences of His Blessed Spirit, and each performance opens our minds for larger influxes of His grace, and places them in communion with Him. “If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him<sup>d</sup>,” and God has thereby annexed to it a joy, according to its measure of performance. Prayer, especially, has its blessings, not only in common with other duties, in that it brings us into (if I may so speak) a community with God, that it is an acting according to His will, that it opens our souls to receive more strength, but that it is direct speaking to Him. In it the soul is directly

<sup>c</sup> S. John xii. 48.

<sup>d</sup> Ib. xiv. 23.

brought, as it were, face to face towards God, and He alloweth His face to shine upon us, and us to turn towards Him, and to speak as a man speaketh to a father and a friend. It is not, however, ordinary prayer (as men call prayer), which has these privileges, or which the Apostle here enjoins. Whether men may attain to heaven with less than he here speaks of, we know not; as what the amount of each other's prayer is, we know not; but this we know, that there is for us no safe rule, short of aiming at the utmost which God enjoins, and that any wilful falling short of this is *sin*.

The Apostle's words are strong, "continue instant in prayer;" and lest you should be tempted to think that these words are not to be taken so strongly as they are said, I would add, that in his own tongue they are yet stronger; they express more difficult effort, more endurance. It is the same word which is used<sup>e</sup> to express how the first Christians, who had just been pricked in the heart, and been saved by Baptism from the impending wrath, "*continued or held* steadfastly to the teaching of the Apostles, and the fellowship with them, and to the breaking of bread (or the Holy Eucharist), and *to prayer*." It describes how men would cling and hold fast, mightily putting forth all their strength, to that which was their life, which if they let slip they perished; and this saying of St. Luke shows that the early Christians actually *did* this, to which St. Paul exhorts. We need not, however, take these passages by themselves, as if we rested the need of a greater degree of prayer than now appears to be common, on

<sup>e</sup> Acts ii. 42.

one word of Holy Scripture, although that were a faithless heart which needs more than one word from God, and even in our common intercourse we speak of "one word's sufficing." To turn then to other places. St. Paul repeats to the Colossians<sup>f</sup>, "Continue instant," or "hold fast to prayer," being "*watchful*<sup>g</sup> or wakeful therein with thanksgiving<sup>h</sup>," the very word which our Lord uses constantly, of our duty in earnestly expecting and looking for His coming. Again to the Ephesians, with many words, he exhorts them<sup>i</sup> to pray in the Spirit with *all* prayer and supplication at *all* seasons<sup>k</sup>, and *watching thereunto*, i. e., for this very purpose<sup>l</sup> of prayer, passing sleepless nights<sup>m</sup>, (at all events depriving themselves of sleep,) with *all* perseverance (again our very word)<sup>n</sup> and supplication. As indeed herein he speaks the very words of our Lord<sup>o</sup>. "Look, (i. e., be heedful,) be watchful<sup>p</sup>, (sleepless,) and pray; for ye know not when the time is;" and again<sup>q</sup>, "watch ye therefore (be wakeful) at *all* seasons, praying that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." So that now we have not one word only, but many; and in what company! "Watchfulness," "sleeplessness," "at *all* seasons," "with *all* enduringness," "to pray with *all* prayer." Observe only how this word "*all*," is repeated, lest we should think that any thing short of "*all*," of

<sup>f</sup> Chap. iv. 2.

<sup>g</sup> γρηγοροῦντες.

<sup>h</sup> ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ.

<sup>i</sup> Eph. vi. 18.

<sup>k</sup> ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ.

<sup>l</sup> εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο.

<sup>m</sup> ἀγρυπνοῦντες. <sup>n</sup> ἐν πασῇ προσκατερήσει. <sup>o</sup> S. Mark xiii. 33.

<sup>p</sup> ἀγρυπνεῖτε.

<sup>q</sup> S. Luke xxi. 36.

which we were capable, might content us. And for what end? That we may have the highest post of honour, and sit at His right hand and His left in His kingdom? No! but that we may be *safe*. He Who died for us, Love Infinite, bids us “watch, praying at all seasons, that so we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before” Him, “the Son of Man;” Him Who for our sakes became “the Son of Man,” our Judge, when He shall “judge men according to their works.” And now we shall be prepared to take to the letter, without explaining them away, our Lord’s words, “that men ought *always* to pray and not to faint<sup>r</sup>,” or give over from weariness and want of endurance, and St. Paul’s “pray without ceasing<sup>s</sup>.”

In old times they took these things to the letter. We have seen how the first converts went before St. Paul’s command, and “continued instant,” or “clung instantly to prayer.” Before the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, the Church which was gathered in that upper room were with one mind, men and women, (again our very word,) “holding fast to prayer and supplication.” The Apostles, when putting from them the settling of worldly disputes, expressed their purpose in the same words, “to hold fast, give themselves continually to prayer.” Yea, prayer went beyond the bounds of the Christian Church, and the Heathen Cornelius prayed to God continually<sup>t</sup>; and for his prayers’ and alms’ sake was accounted worthy to be made the first-fruits of us Gentiles.

<sup>r</sup> S. Luke xviii. 1.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Thess. v. 7.

<sup>t</sup> διαπαντός.



When St. Peter was in danger, "unceasing, intense" prayer was made of the Church unto God for him," and even by night it was still continued<sup>v</sup>. "A real widow and one really solitary," St. Paul says, was one who "continued in prayer *night and day*." Anna the prophetess, who was thought worthy to behold the Lord's Christ, had "served God with fastings and prayers night and day" more than the whole life of man, at his full strength; and after the service of eighty-four long years of widowhood, had, at the last, her full reward, and saw and spake of that redemption for which, during almost a whole century of prayer and fasting night and day, she had been looking.

And so afterwards, for many centuries, they took to the letter the words of Scripture. "Seven" set "times a day" did they pray to God, because God had by holy David set forth this as an example; they fulfilled the Psalmist's words, "*at midnight I will rise to give thanks* unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgements<sup>v</sup>:" and, "I came before the dawning of the morning and cried<sup>z</sup>." At midnight and before break of day they rose to meditate upon God, and "in the night His song was with them, and their prayer unto the God of their life<sup>a</sup>." So that after some hundred years, when prayer might be thought to have become colder, one<sup>b</sup> says, "Many of those engaged in worldly business most carefully observe this devotion, rising before day-break or at twilight, and do not involve

<sup>u</sup> ἐκτενής.

<sup>v</sup> Acts xii. 12.

<sup>w</sup> 1 Tim. v. 5.

<sup>x</sup> S. Luke ii. 37.

<sup>y</sup> Ps. cxix. 62.

<sup>z</sup> Ib. 147.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. xlii. 8.

<sup>b</sup> Cassian Collat. xxi. 26.



themselves in the common and necessary actions of this world, before that, hasting to the Church, they labour to consecrate to the Divine Presence the first-fruits of all their doings." Another<sup>c</sup> says, "The customs among us are agreeable to *all the Churches of God*. For with us the people rising early, while it is night, come to the house of prayer, and there, with much contrition and tears make confession of their sins to God;" and then goes on to speak of a regular full service. On the two solemn week-days of supplication, the Wednesday and Friday, they remained in the Church, praying, hearing, praising, receiving the Holy Eucharist, from morning until three in the afternoon; and down to the times of our own Reformation, the daily service, even when the people had forsaken it, and the priest prayed alone for all, occupied three hours at least daily. Such was their *public* weekly prayer, and what think you was their private? Think you that God was at other times out of their thoughts, who laboured thus to "sanctify Him in their hearts." Their very meals were hallowed with the reading God's word. Does not this approach to explaining what prayer without ceasing is? and men *have* so prayed. And what are we, that we should tamper with God's Word, and presume to pass over as figurative and impossible what they found to be possible and real? How may we venture to say that our Lord, when He bids us pray "at *all* times," means "sometimes;" that when God by St. Paul says, "pray without ceasing," He means "pray now and then, but for the most part cease;" that when

<sup>c</sup> S. Basil. Ep. 63. ad Neocæsar.

He bids us "hold fast to prayer," He means that "we should let it go;" that "by night and day" means "a few thoughts of God morning and evening;" that "watchfulness and sleeplessness" means "slumber and sleep, to sleep on and take our rest;" that to "pray all *all* seasons" means, (and this is the very best of these explanations,) to "be at all times in a state *fit* for prayer, if we were called upon, but, not thinking ourselves called upon, not to pray, except at *two* seasons perhaps, morning and evening?" What is this but to mock God, and to trifle with His word and our own souls? Yet men act as if they meant this, although they obviously would not dare to speak with such naked profaneness.

But men are apt to picture to themselves Christians of old time, as different men, men of another race, with other feelings, trials, difficulties, not encumbered by worldly occupations as we are, and that this was possible for them, but not for us. It was possible, neither for them nor for us; it is not possible for man. Fasting, prayer, continued, unwearied supplication, are not the works of the flesh. The flesh is too weak. These very men, the very chief of the Apostles, St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, "could not watch with" their Lord "*one* hour" in His most bitter agony. By praying, they learnt to pray; by praying, they had strength given to them to pray effectually, continually; and we, by neglecting prayer, have unlearnt to pray, and find more difficulty in half-fulfilling our scanty measure to which we have stinted ourselves, than they in watchings and unceasing prayer; even as one un-

practised is soon wearied of the labour, which increases but the energy of those inured thereto. Our very laxity in prayer, our infrequency, our want of perseverance, have also made many practically think that they can pray, of themselves. They have made their burdens so light, that they think they can bear them themselves; they can pray, such as prayer now is. But when it was the employment of life, when men watched thereto, fasted thereto, denied themselves lawful pleasures, that they might give themselves thereto; when they tore themselves from worldly thoughts and dwelt in Heaven, i. e., "meditated," in order thereto; when it was looked upon not merely as a means for obtaining what men wanted, but an end—in that it was communion with God—when it was an end of other means, and people employed other things, fasting, self-denial, abstinence, abstraction from the world, resolute fixedness of soul, as means to fit themselves for this; when it formed a large part of life, then men saw and felt, that prayer was a weighty work, which of themselves they could not do; that "of ourselves we know not what to ask,"—and so "the Spirit helped their infirmities, and made supplication for them with groanings unutterable, according to the will of God."

But how had men time for this prayer? We must provide, men say, for our families, we must do our duties in our several callings, and in the sweat of our brow we must eat bread. So did they; even to St. Paul, who prayed continually, night and day, when occasion called, his "own hands ministered to his necessities." The Apostolic rule was, "If any

man will not work, neither let him eat." They worked with their own hands, not for their families merely, but that "they might have to give to him that needeth." But they had leisure! The needs, which God lays upon us, hurt no man's leisure; as leisure given to God hurts no man's work. They are our own self-chosen employments, the cares wherewith we cumber ourselves, which hinder prayer; a worldly, mistrusting, selfish, plotting, spirit, looking out for gain, or for advancement; scheming for the morrow, anxious to equal or to outdo a neighbour, discontent with what God has given; "getting on in life." Or it is, in a better sort, loving the employments and activity and business and bustle of this life, for its own sake; instead of enduring it in order to serve God therein, and do our appointed task to His glory, not for any end of our own. These are the things which leave no room for prayer, because they leave no desire to pray. They, "whose god is this world," how should they afford time for prayer to any other than the god which they have chosen? The Ephesians could cry out "for the space of two hours, Great is Diana of the Ephesians," but they had no hearts to pray to the to them "Unknown God." If men will make this world their object, they cannot pray except to the god of this world, Satan; and to him they pray, though they think it not, and pray not to God, though they think it. They, in the Faith's better days, cumbered themselves not with perishable things, and so they had leisure for eternal. They prided themselves not about having the rule of the cities or of the empire wherein they lived. They thought not that



power was theirs and they were its dispensers, and so they had leisure to “pray for kings and those who were in authority;” and by their prayers they upheld empires, wherewith they meddled not, and obtained for themselves and others to “live a peaceable and godly life.” They (at least such as left not the Church) criticised not their ministers, nor employed themselves in “doubtful disputations;” and so they had leisure to pray for their Ministers, as St. Paul often besought them. They pried not each into their neighbours’ faults, and entertained themselves not with scandal, and things which should not be spoken of, and so had leisure to pray for them, and to help to restore them. Thus the prayers, which men now often count “a weariness,” those “for kings, and those in authority,” and for the Clergy and their congregations (what men class together as the state prayers), they prayed with thankfulness. Our daily service, which men now count long, would to them have appeared (as it is) short. They did not, like Martha, cumber themselves with many things, and so they had leisure, with Mary, to sit at their Saviour’s feet, and choose that good part which *hath not* been taken away from them.

Such is the teaching of God in Holy Scripture, such the conduct of those who in old times were “Christians indeed”—not of the few or of eminent Saints, but of the people—of Churches; not for reward simply or for glory, but to save their souls, “that they might stand before the Son of Man.” If they so understood Scripture, who of us may in these days say that less is necessary for us? Almighty God might, had it so pleased Him, have commanded



us to pray, morning and evening, as He ordered to the Jews a morning and evening sacrifice, but He has not. He might have bid us pray by day only, but He has joined the night thereto. He tells us of "His elect, who cry day and night unto Him<sup>d</sup>;" of them who have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb (as we in Baptism were), being before the throne of God, and serving Him day and night in His temple. He has enforced upon us in so many ways continual, unceasing prayer, and never has enjoined it without speaking of its unceasingness.

It may be one reason, why God speaks thus largely, that we may never rest short, never think that we have enough, that we may strive to fill up the measure which is immeasurable. Anna doubtless, in her eighty-fourth solitary year of continual prayer, understood more what to "pray without ceasing" was, than she ever had before. Moses, after he had twice "fallen down before the Lord" forty days and forty nights, and did neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, but, sustained by God, prayed continually, knew something what to "pray without ceasing" was. He had seen an image, he had had a foretaste of the unceasing prayer and praise of Heaven. St. Paul knew something, after he had been struck to the earth, and for three days neither ate nor drank, nor saw anything of this world, but prayed. Far more he knew, after having served God for above thirty years, "without ceasing (as we know), having remembrance in his prayers" of all his converts, of all the Churches, of his own nation, and (of which alone he does not speak) of himself. But who in these

<sup>d</sup> S. Luke xviii. 7.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Tim. i. 3. Phil. i. 4.

days might venture to say, what to “pray without ceasing” is? The very best, the few among us, are but learning it; and they, when advanced some years more in their pilgrimage, would tell us differently, and speak more nearly the truth, as they had learnt more; and if they were to speak, their words would “seem but as idle tales,” and men would “not believe” them. God only can teach men what it is, as He only can help them on each step towards it; and He will help those who follow Him.

It is rather for us to say what it is not—who are not even on their way towards it—and if not, who are not in earnest preparing themselves to stand before the Son of Man, their Judge. I speak herein not of persons openly profligate, living in gross sin, plainly before the eyes of men breaking God’s laws. What have they to do with prayer or with the Son of God? “The prayer of the wicked” (of him who goeth on in his wickedness) “is an abomination:” God said, “My soul hateth iniquity and the solemn meeting”<sup>f</sup>—Church-going and wilful sin. These have their own punishment. I speak not of these, but of regular worldly persons; industrious, diligent, kindly in their way, but worldly, i. e., living for this world, with occasional thoughts, when it must be, of another.

They then (to speak of our public assembling together) are not even in the way of continual prayer, who wilfully abstain from any opportunity of coming to the house of God; who come at one time of day, and not another, when, by a little contrivance or some self-denial, they might come at

<sup>f</sup> Isa. i. 13.

both times; or who come chiefly for the sermon, and come not when there are prayers only. Much more when people leave the Church altogether, and go to places where there is less of prayer (and this is very often the real ground why people prefer meeting-houses to the Church of God); or who choose for themselves employments or professions, or services, without thinking or heeding whether they will prevent their coming to God's house or no; or who, having chosen them, stay in them, without doing all in their power to perform this duty, and if they cannot, do not leave them; or who make the sight of friends, whom they of long time have not seen, a reason for breaking the duty of coming hither, preferring the society of their earthly friends to the Presence of their Lord, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost; or who make slight illness or other causes, which would not detain them from their worldly business or amusement, an excuse why they should not come to the house of God; or who come, but without impressing upon their minds "how holy and dreadful is this place; this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven;" or they who bring their worldly thoughts, "their sheep, and oxen, and money-changing" to the very threshold of God's temple and rush into the Presence of the Holy God, without having "prepared their hearts to God," to serve Him; or who, as soon as they leave it, return forthwith to "the cares and riches, and pleasures of this world," and quench the gleam of prayer, which for a while shone around them, taking up at the very Church-door the thoughts, and subjects, and conver-

sation of this world, and taking no pains to keep alive in their hearts the holy thoughts, which God may have kindled; as if they might be one self in Church and another out of it, and yet receive no harm. Would that one must not rather say, that these are not in the way to pray to God at all, much less to pray to Him continually! For it is not such dull hearts, so closed and choked up with the concerns of this world, which *can* receive “the Spirit of prayer and supplication” Which God pours forth, and by Which alone men can pray.

Then again, they who come here on the Lord’s day, as a matter of duty, but, although they are not hindered or might easily remove the hindrance or even have full leisure and scarcely know what to do with it, come not to the prayers which are provided for them during the week; and take not the same pains to come hither, which they would be at for some pleasurable meeting, were it permitted; who would “rise early and late take rest” for any unusual worldly matter, but will not “rise early” to “seek the Lord,” or to order their business so (if it be possible) as to come when they can, here: they, in a word, who miss any opportunity of public prayer, which they might by any means have, how are they on the way toward *continual* prayer? They show that, though they come as a duty, (it were sadder yet if they neglected this also,) they have no real love for prayer or for the house of God. And it must be told, that within the memory of man, nay within my own<sup>g</sup>, public prayer has almost everywhere miserably declined; yea, it has been declining,



even while we have been flattering ourselves that in the *knowledge* of God we have been so much increasing, though prayer and the communion of saints together and with Him have been much decreasing. It makes one's heart very faint, and one's hopes shrink back within one's bosom, to read how, even in the last century, which we look upon as so inferior, public prayer so much abounded, and we seem to have lost the very sense of the blessing of daily public prayer. We have increased preaching, but diminished prayer; i. e., increased the means towards devotion, and diminished the end, devotion; we have increased the culture and diminished the fruit.

Again, how can they be said to care about continual prayer, who might have family (itself a poor substitute for public) prayer, but still very acceptable to God, where it only can be had, or where many members of the family could not attend public prayer? What master of a family who has it not, or what mistress who asketh not for it, can be thought to be concerned about prayer?

Public prayer may be measured; its hours can be counted; *private* prayer is immeasurable, for it may be at all times; when in company, as well as when alone; amid conversation, as when silent; “<sup>h</sup>when thou sittest in the house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up;” in the midst of business and employment, as when unoccupied; in short intervals, when for the moment thou seemest to have nothing else to do, or when most employed, that thou mayest do what thy hand findeth to do with all thy

<sup>h</sup> Deut. vi. 7.



might, and “as unto the Lord, not unto men.” “Most businesses,” says a good Doctor<sup>i</sup> of our Church “have wide gaps, all have some chinks, at which, devotion may slip in. Be we never so urgent, or closely intent upon any work, (be we feeding, be we travelling, be we trading, be we studying,) nothing can forbid but that we may together wedge in a thought concerning God’s goodness, and bolt forth a word of praise for it; but that we may reflect on our sins, and spend a penitential sigh on them; but that we may descry our need of God’s help, and dispatch a brief petition. A ‘God be praised,’ a ‘Lord have mercy,’ a ‘God bless’ or ‘God help me,’ will no wise interrupt or disturb our proceedings.”

He then cannot be said to have any care about continual prayer, who passes any day, between morning and evening, without it; who lets his thoughts run on through the day on his daily business, without checking them to offer at least some brief prayer to God; who begins a work without asking God to bless it; who receives a mercy, or his daily food, without blessing Him; who comes into his daily temptations without asking God to deliver him from them; who is beset by any care, and casts it not on God; who does not labour to fix his heart, like David, upon God, that he may praise Him; who does not consider prayer (whatever he may yet have come up to) as the main business of life, as it will be of life eternal, and so does not wish and strive at least to interpose it at all intervals he may have; who does not, at least, divide each day into portions, and begin, at least, each such portion with some prayer.

<sup>i</sup> Barrow, Sermons.

Alas ! my brethren, how many more such proofs might one number up, and some of them would reach us all, and convict us all of not praying continually. Many of them would show that very many know nothing at all of prayer ; and mark us as negligent, if not now, yet formerly ; if not habitually, yet many times ; if at intervals it have been otherwise, yet negligent for the longer periods ; and yet the most of us, not formerly only, but now ; not many times only, but habitually ; not for long periods only, but for a whole life.

And yet our Lord says to each of us, one by one, “<sup>k</sup> Be wakeful, praying at *all* times, that ye may be thought worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass and to *stand before the* Son of Man.”

“Who then shall be saved?” “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.” Yet it is not our concern, who or how many shall be saved. “What is that to thee?” Only strive thou to pray constantly.

“<sup>l</sup> God will have all men to be saved.” Save thou thyself. By prayer in our Redeemer’s Name thou mayest be saved, not by questioning ; yea, and thou mayest help to save others, by praying for them, not by asking how they can be saved.

Especially it is of moment *at once* to begin any duty which is put into thy thoughts. Let any one who has been in the habit of negligently coming hither but once on the Lord’s day, henceforth come twice ; let those who have prayed solemnly but morning and evening, try to find some settled time in every day between, if but for a short prayer,

<sup>k</sup> S. Luke xxi. 36.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 4.

yet regular prayer; let him pray thrice, whereas all Christians of old prayed seven times. Let him take any one hour which they set apart for their devotions; *nine*, when our Lord vouchsafed to receive from His creature the sentence of condemnation, to die for us, and when the Holy Ghost first came down upon the Christian Church; or *twelve*, when our Lord was nailed to the cross for us; or *three*, when, having borne for us His Father's wrath, He resigned His Blessed Spirit into His Father's hands: and let those who can, take all. "How," says an ancient Bishop<sup>m</sup>, "can we do less than three times in the day at least (besides morning and evening, which will of themselves invite us to prayer) fall down and worship the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?"

By God's mercy, as a means of grace, and as a test to you of your sincerity, two additional weekly services have, at the desire of your minister<sup>n</sup>, been obtained for this place. Great may be the blessing to you all. True, that they are but two services, when our Church would have bestowed twelve; that they are but mornings in the week, when our Church would have had us, morning by morning and evening by evening, present our morning and evening sacrifice to God in this His house of prayer. But though not all which your Church or your minister could wish, it is something. It is

<sup>m</sup> Isidore, Etym. 1. 6. c. ult., quoted by Bishop Cosins, Devotions.

<sup>n</sup> Preached in a considerable hamlet, where the chapel, being the private property of a nobleman, and not consecrated, the Clergyman, though officiating with the sanction of the Bishop, had no power to increase the services when or as he would.

something that this holy house is not, from one Lord's day to another, to be left desolate in one unbroken silence from prayer and praise, in one sabbath from prayer. It is something, that it may hinder the unholy thought from arising in the heart of any, as if by giving each seventh day, in a way, to God, they thereby acquired a right to deal with the other six as their own. It is something, yea and a great thing, that there will be a band of worshippers, who, while they sanctify the week to themselves, may obtain blessings for others who are lawfully hindered. Yea, and those who are hindered from being present in body, may yet in spirit join when the sound of the bell invites such as can come; and those who come, be they few or many, will not be alone; they will be joined by those who in other temples of God throughout this land, or in other branches of our Church, or of the "holy Church throughout all the world," with the same devotion, "acknowledge Him;" they will be joined here below by more than the seven thousand in Israel, to pray God to be entreated for our Church and for our land; they will be joined by, rather they will join, cherubim and seraphim, in crying, "Holy, holy, holy," to the "Lord God of hosts." Nay, were our eyes opened, like those of the prophet's servant, or the shepherds, we might see this place, wherein we are assembled, "full of the heavenly host," perhaps also of the spirits of departed saints, who once with you worshipped here, "praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Were but two or three gathered together, there, as He has promised, is a



Fourth ever with you, and “the form of the Fourth is not *“as,”* it *is* “the Son of God.”

It is a great mercy of God, that after the past negligence of members of our Church, He in any degree restores to us the public worship of Himself. Each such restoration holds out the hope that He has mercies in store for us. It is a mercy also that He restores to us the two days of solemn supplication, whereon our Church has provided for us the deepest words of humiliation. Then it brings before God all the diseases of our souls, for which we need forgiveness and His deliverance; all the blessings which for ourselves, our friends, or the whole Church, we need crave; all blessings for this life, and His mercies “in the hour of death and at the Day of Judgement.” If these be used aright, it may be He will grant more. At all events, those who penitently and faithfully remember Him in this house of prayer, He will not forget: those whom He teacheth to “remember the Name of the Lord their God” on earth, He will “remember, when He cometh in His kingdom.”

It is an anxious thing to think how any unaccustomed mercy of God will be used, how any call of His to unaccustomed duty will be obeyed. Yet I cannot think that, in this place, where so many have been brought near to Christ in Holy Communion, there will not be many also, glad to come when He will be “in the midst” of them, and say “Peace be unto you.” Frequent communions require frequent humiliations. The more solemn these are, the more blessed; the more we humble ourselves, the more shall we receive Him, Who “dwelleth in the

humble and contrite heart." And it is not, doubtless, without His good Providence, "without Whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground," that the permission to open this house of prayer during the week has just coincided with the weekly administration of Holy Communion. For weekly Communion demands increase of prayer and strictness, both that we may retain that which we have received and prepare more earnestly for what we are hoping to receive. So may we, who have now received the pledges of our Saviour's love, who have had "our sinful bodies made clean by His Body and our souls washed by His most precious Blood," continue the more hopefully on those solemn days to implore the full and final remission of our sins at the Day of Judgement. So we who by this partial cleansing of the stain of our sins have received the grace of more trustful love, may have the more boldness to approach to God, and through His Ever-Blessed Son, to call Him, Father. So, obtaining fresh grace through these services of humiliation, we may, when, by His mercy, the Holy Communion shall next be vouchsafed to us, be less unfit to receive Him, His Body and His Blood, to dwell in Him and He in us.

To all Communicants, then, these services are offered as a special gift; as to them, if they be faithful, every other gift of God is heightened by their being partakers of Him. Yet they are a blessing to all: a special blessing to the broken in heart and to the mourner, that they may mourn the sins for which God sent their chastisement, and breathe here the air and the balm of heaven; yet are they

too a blessing to those in joy, that they may learn to "use this world as not abusing it," and amid this world's joys forget not the joys everlasting. They are a blessing to "those who stand," that they may be strengthened; to "the weak-hearted" that they may be comforted and holpen; to "those that fall," that they may be raised up. To the aged, they will be blessed resting-places in their way to their approaching home, that, having met their God here, they may with less fear meet Him in the hour of death. To the sickly, they are a support; to the strong, a spiritual strength, that they may be strong against themselves; to the lonely, a home; to the disappointed, satisfaction; to the empty, fulness; to the fearful, encouragement; to the drooping, restoration; to the anxious and perplexed, ease and sure trust in God; to the penitent sinner, they are an approach to God, and a gleam from his Father's countenance.

I cannot think then, that in this place, in which so many must have leisure, this gift of God will be ungratefully thrown back upon Him. Many must have full leisure; many, by a little contrivance, (as rising a little earlier,) could make it; many an aged member, even of the poorer families, might well come here, to pray that their own departure may be in peace, and to beg God's blessing on those of their family who still bear the burthen and heat of the day. Even they who labour must find days, during which their work is, for a time, at a stand. Let all take what means they can, make what opportunities they can; and God will bless them according to the means He has given, and their diligence in using

them. He will bless them and their families here; He will bless them with His favour and the light of His Countenance hereafter.

Only remember that this gift is not only a privilege. It is one for which, as for every gift, you must give account. You cannot wilfully abstain from coming to these weekly prayers, and be in the same state as you were when there were none; you cannot neglect God's gift and be guiltless. Rather to such as can come, these fresh opportunities may be a test of your sincerity; and by your gladness to avail yourselves of them, you may see whether you attended the services of the Lord's day out of habit, or sluggishly as a duty, or out of real love to God and gladness in serving Him. God forbid, that one should discourage any ever so weakly or even slavish service of God! Better to serve Him as a slave, than not to serve Him at all; better to attend the public worship on the Lord's day only, than to forsake it altogether. Yet they only have the privilege of sons, who delight in serving Him, who serve Him gladly whenever they can, rejoice in the multiplied offers of serving Him, and look upon them not as duties only, but as blessings. Nor can they who serve Him not as sons here, reckon themselves safe that He will acknowledge them as sons hereafter. They who wilfully neglect praying to and praising Him here, how can they feel safe that He will admit them to share in the endless halleluiahs round His throne, in that heaven where all is His praise?

Lose then no time. Avoid all things which may be hindrances to prayer; think on the four last things, death, judgement, heaven, hell; think how



much depends upon thy prayers ; pray morning by morning to be enabled to pray ; strive against covetousness, or sensuality, or the cares of this life, which prevent thy thinking upon God ; make efforts to win thy soul from the business of this life, if but now and then, for a thought on God ; use all the stated means in thy power, and make what thou canst. If thou wakest in the night, pray ; when thou wakest in the morning, be thy first thought prayer ; be-think thee that the journey is hard for thee, the way slippery, thy feet easily wearied, thy strength small, and haste thee “to the mountain,” the Rock of ages, “lest thou be consumed.”

And above all, neglect not any thought which God puts into thy heart (as He does oftentimes) to pray. The thought to pray must come from Him ; it cannot come from thyself or from the evil one. Pray, wherever thou art, whatever thou art doing ; man will not see it, but God will ; and thy Father Who seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly. The first step on this way of frequent prayer, is the first step on Jacob’s ladder, its foot on earth, its top in heaven ; look not above, lest thou faint and sink back ; nor downwards lest thou turn dizzy ; but go on, step by step, labouring to make thy prayers more and more continual and fervent, and God shall send His angels to conduct thee, and thy Saviour shall intercede for thee, and the Holy Ghost shall strengthen thee, and thou shalt win thy way step by step, until the cloud of death close round thee, and then thou shalt find that the first step to continual earnest prayer was “the gate of heaven.”

## SERMON XI.

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### CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

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ST. JOHN xvi. 23.

*“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you.”*

Most persons have, at some time or other, felt painfully, how far this great promise has been from being fulfilled to them, in their prayers either by themselves or with the Church. To take one prayer only, we pray daily for the gathering in of the heathen into the one fold, and how few are brought in; that those already gathered into the Church may “hold the faith,” yet how many depart from it; “in unity of spirit,” and how are we divided; “in the bond of peace,” and how are we rent asunder and contending one against another, Church against Church; those who have forsaken the Church, saying, “down with her;” and ourselves, within, speaking one against the other, accusing one another. We pray that all who profess and call themselves Christians may hold that faith “in righteousness of life,” and yet how do all sorts of sins, and open impurity and ungodliness,

\* For all sorts and conditions of men.

stare us in the face everywhere, and seem to have the mastery among us, and covetousness seems to be let loose, like a demon, over our land, and almost to possess us, ruling us, knowing or unknowing, with a rod of iron, corrupting our dealings with each other, and making men hard-hearted to the poor, and stinting the alms of those who do give; besides all the secret sins which witness against us before the All-seeing God. Then, as to ourselves, we pray against our infirmities, and find ourselves still weighed down by them; we pray against "the sin which doth so easily beset us," and find ourselves still overtaken; we pray to be more heavenly, and find ourselves on earth; against bad thoughts, and are still haunted by them; against distractions in prayer itself, and yet wander from our Father's presence to the nothingnesses of this life. Again, our Lord has promised to guide us into His truth, yet persons pray on this side and that, in the Church and out of it, and since they are opposed to each other, some must remain in error.

How is it then? Our Lord has said, "All<sup>b</sup> things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Since then "the Lord's promise standeth sure," have we no belief, that we receive not? Do we not "abide in Him, or His words abide in us," that His word is not fulfilled; "° if ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you?" Do we not "ask," that "we" receive" not? Are we not "seeking," that we "find" not? Are we not "knocking," that it is not "opened" to us? Are we not "asking

<sup>b</sup> S. Matt. xxi. 22.

<sup>c</sup> S. John xv. 7.

in His Name," that the "Father giveth" not to us? And if it be so now, what are our hopes for the future, or have we any?

Alas, of very many it is too certain that they never pray, make not even the show of prayer. Too many only who seem to pray, ask with their lips, what in their hearts they care not for, or would dread to have. They ask that God's "will be done," but follow only their own; they pray to be "delivered from evil," yet evil is in all they love and live in. Of the prayers, which come forth from the lips, one must fear, that if we knew "the secrets of men's hearts," as God Almighty knoweth them, we should find that of many thousands, the real prayers are very few. So that we can no longer be surprised that prayer is so little heard, when there is reason to fear that there is so little of prayer.

But for ourselves, who are in earnest praying, or seeking to pray, what are the conditions implied by our Lord's promise? So may we see more distinctly, whether we are in the way to obtain it, and if we are not hitherto in the way, or sorely grieve that our prayers have hitherto so manifoldly failed, how we may attain to it. He says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in *My Name*," as elsewhere, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*;" and again, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you;" and again, "<sup>d</sup>Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing that ye shall have them;" and again, "<sup>e</sup>That men ought always to pray and not to faint." Whence it appears that the conditions of prayer which shall be heard are:—1) A right faith; "in My Name."

<sup>d</sup> S. Mark xi. 24.

<sup>e</sup> S. Luke xviii. 1.



2) A right life; "if My words abide in you."  
3) That we be members of His body; "If ye abide in Me." 4. And confidence as to the very subject of our prayer; "Believing that ye shall have them." 5) Perseverance.

And these points mutually bear, the one upon the other, in a way and degree which we should not at first think. Thus, whence comes want of perseverance, but from want of humility, in that we think we have a claim to receive at once what we ask for, or from want of faith, not realizing the value of what we hope for? Whereas, did we feel our own meanness by nature, that "man," even apart from self-contracted evil, is a worm;" did we yet more own our exceeding deformity and foulness by our own sins, deserving wrath only, or did we think of the greatness of what we hope for, what prayer were earnest, fervent, lowly, persevering enough, for beings such as we are to ask for things so unutterably great? that men should for ever behold, be likened to, possess, God!

Again, we, in the Church, are not mostly tempted to actual unbelief or misbelief in the Object of our faith, being happily fenced round by the Creeds, which we repeat in our devotions. Still they cannot have worthy thoughts of Him, whose life is unworthy of Him; they cannot have reverent thoughts of Him, whose habit of mind is irreverent; they cannot think worthily of the Holy Ghost, who continually go against His gracious suggestions, or are by wilfulness grieving Him away. They cannot think rightly of God the Son, who think little or carelessly of those sins for which He died. They cannot pray rightly in His Name, or believe in His Divine intercession

for us, whom sin hinders from knowing their own nothingness, who approach to God easily and lightly, as though they might ask in their own name. Our true thoughts of God are God's thoughts in us. As we are then, such must our thoughts of Him be. Of the wicked, God saith "thou thoughtest that I was such an one as thyself." The churl cannot think of God as bountiful; nor can the impure think of Him as pure; nor the unmerciful think of Him as merciful; nor the unholy think of Him as holy. They only can believe in Him as He is, who shall, hereafter "see Him as He is." They whom He has purified, and who are now "purifying themselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in His fear."

We must not then take these conditions of acceptable prayer separately, but together; for then only will they, severally also, be of the right sort in us, when they are found, in whatever degree, growing up in us together. It is not true then, as some have said, that *their* faith cannot be wrong, whose life is in the right, taking at once a carnal standard both of life and faith; or as others, many ways, that if the faith be right, if they hold the words of the Creed, (it may be without realizing them,) or if they profess to be justified through the all-sufficient merits of our Redeemer, and in no way trust in themselves, the fruits of such profession must needs be a right life; but watching over each separately, examining each, praying that in each what is yet lacking may be supplied.

"In My Name." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the

<sup>f</sup> Ps. 1. 21.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 1.

<sup>h</sup> S. John xv. 16.

Father in My Name, He will give it you," as again, He saith, "<sup>i</sup> Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will *I* do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son: if ye shall ask any thing in My Name, *I* will do it;" shewing thereby that we must ask Him as One God with the Father, of equal Power and Majesty with the Father, so that whatsoever is given to our prayers, is given to us equally by the Father and the Son, as being One.

It suffices not then, that we ask "in His Name," if we believe not in Him, as He has revealed Himself unto us. We ask not in His Name, "the Name which is above every name, whereat every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and earth, and under the earth;" if we ask in His Name, as other than He is, "Very God of Very God," not according to any "doctrines of men," but as He has declared Himself, existing in the Co-Eternal and Co-Equal Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, in Whose Name we were, by Baptism, made members of the Ever-Blessed Son. And this we should seek to impress upon ourselves, by repeating our Creeds, and earnest meditation, that we approach Him not only as the Redeemer and High Priest, Who was not ashamed to "call us Brethren," but as our Lord and our God, Who as God heareth the prayers, which as God, Who hath taken into Himself our manhood, He presenteth to the Father with Whom He is One God. So only shall we be saved from irreverence, and pray really in His great Name.

"In My Name;" not then in any way or degree in our own name, but in His; in the hallowed ador-

<sup>i</sup> S. John xiv. 13, 14.

able Name of Jesus, of Him Who "shall save His people from their sins;" not as deserving any thing of ourselves, but acquiring our only right of approaching Him, in that we have been taken out of ourselves, our natural state of nothingness and decay, and have been grafted into Him. Yea, and being in Him, still in His Name, not as having any confidence in ourselves, our faith, our works, our feelings, God's gifts to us or in us, our talents, station, wealth; nay, nor if God have wrought any thing by our hands, but rather fearing the more exceedingly, for every gift which God has bestowed upon us, lest it turn to our condemnation; confessing our poverty, the more He has enriched us; our blindness, the more He has enlightened us; our waywardness, the more He has done to favour us; our emptiness, the more He has bestowed upon us. For this it is which oftentimes makes our case so sad to us; "if I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin<sup>k</sup>." It is the many calls which we have had from Him, but have not obeyed as we ought; it is the abundant grace, which we have not used; it is the richness and fulness of His ordinances afforded to us, year by year, week by week, day after day, which we have so often wasted; it is that we have, too likely, ever stopped short of what His gracious love designed for us, that we have never used to the full the talents committed to us, which makes our failures and our sins such an intolerable burthen. Yet this sense of nothingness we find not only in such as we mostly are, but, much more in

<sup>k</sup> S. John xv. 22.



those eminent saints, whose prayers have been especially regarded by God. How much more then in us! When Abraham prayed for Sodom and the cities of the plain, and obtained that all should be spared, if there were but ten righteous, when he was exalted to be an image of the All-prevailing "Mediator between God and man," he confessed himself to be but "dust and ashes." When Job was bid to be a mediator and offer sacrifice, and pray for his three friends, it was when he had said, "<sup>1</sup>I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." When Daniel's prayer was accepted for his people, and Gabriel was sent forth from the presence of God to declare to him the coming of our Lord, "<sup>m</sup>to make reconciliation for sin and bring in everlasting righteousness," it was when he had set his face to the Lord his God to seek by prayer, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes; when he was confessing his sin and the sin of his people, "to us belongeth confusion of face," "not for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies." This sense of nothingness there must be in us, if we would be accepted, not working ourselves up to feel it, or deceiving ourselves, but confessing it the more, if we feel it not, since we have not, for our sins or our pride, obtained of God the grace to feel it. We must confess it by an act of faith, as what we know and believe of ourselves, though our hearts be too hard and cold and stony to feel it, and must pray Him, Who brought water out of the stony rock, to moisten our stony hearts with the dew of His Life-giving Spirit, that we may feel it. This is the very essence of all

<sup>1</sup> Job xlii. 6.<sup>m</sup> Dan. ix. 24. &c.

prayer; confession of need to Him, Who Alone hath. The parched and gaping earth, the young raven's cry, the lion's roar, are set forth to us as so many images of our prayer; only they, unreasoning as they be, know what they need, and we, duller still, know not what to ask, and so have the more need to pass by ourselves and cast ourselves on Him, and pray in His Name, Who has "all things in heaven and earth," to give us what He knows to be good for us; to give us, above all, His Spirit, Who, when "<sup>n</sup>we know not what we should pray for as we ought, maketh intercession for us with unutterable groanings," and that "according to the will of God."

In Heaven they have praise; in Eden we had, and might have praised; in Heaven again, they who are brought thither safe, shall have of their own, shall have the "true riches," and "everlasting joy," and shall praise for ever; here, while we are pilgrims and strangers,—estranged the more from our home, in that we make this too much our home,—we must pray, as then only "possessing all things," when we know we "have nothing." What we have, we have not of our own, but lent us. Nothing abides with us, as a token to us that here we shall not abide ourselves; what we seem most to have of our own is so, only by a continual renewal of what is decaying; our strength daily decays and is exhausted, to be renewed by daily food and nightly sleep; our wealth and subsistence is daily spent and daily replenished; our memories are ever decaying and ever restored; our spirits live not on

<sup>n</sup> Rom. viii. 26.

what we had, once for all, but are continually fed by the teaching of the same truths, the hearing of the same Word of God, the repeating of the same Creeds, the praying of the same prayers, and, if we are full grown and faithful, by the continual receiving of the same Bread of Life. We are, throughout life, by holding what we have, as not our own, learning to be fitted to have of our own, in the only way in which created being can have any good, in entire dependence upon Him, Who created all, and Whose own all are, since in Him and through Him all have and had their being. As without Him we could not be, so without Him we could not use one function of our being, and neither have what we have, nor use what we seem to have, except to our own ruin. Our strength, and the power to use it, and much more the grace not to abuse it; our thoughts, and the power to control or direct our thoughts, are from Him. Without Him we could not think one good thought, speak one good word, form one good wish, perform one good act. All grace, whereby we do things gracious and grateful to Him, is His; all power to use His grace is a second grace of His; that we fall not more short of His grace than any do, is His. All which is our own, is for the most part our short-comings, infirmities, negligences, ignorances, sins; at best, it is the not casting aside His grace in us, going along with it when we are moved, rising when we are called, standing up when bidden to arise; and we walk in That Name which gives strength to our palsied limbs, over which it was in Baptism first pronounced, and by virtue of which all other calls have their power.

And if what we seem to have is dependent upon Him, to be supplied daily by Him, how much more what we have not! Alas! one need not speak, in such as most of us are, of increase of grace and glory, but of repentance yet incomplete and to be perfected; of sins, whose pardon is as yet unsealed; of vanities, yet slowly to be unlearned; of defilements yet to be burned out; of fitness for Heaven yet to be acquired; of perseverance to the end yet to be obtained. So truly, whether we look to what we have or what we have not, have we need to ask in His saving Name, that what we have may, notwithstanding our frequent misuse of it, our never-ceasing shortcomings, be continued to us, what we have not may be added for His sake, from Whom alone we have what we have, in Whom alone our very being is. So truly is the confession of our emptiness, the condition of our being filled. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" I will fill it in proportion to the wideness of thy petitions: "according to thy faith be it unto thee;" more if our faith be more, if less, in that degree lost.

In My Name." We must then have a right to approach in That Name, a right to ask in That Name; and that is, if we have been admitted within the compass of that Name of strength, and having been once admitted still abide in Christ; in other words, if, by being baptized into That Name, we have become members of His Body, and having been made such, do by obedience abide in Him. We could have no right to name that Name of ourselves. Sinners could have no right to name that Holy



Name, at which devils tremble. “<sup>p</sup>Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?” Our very faith entitles us not to it; it belongs to us not by any act of our own, but by His, adopting us, re-creating us, giving us a “new Name,” even His own, as having been re-created in Himself; and putting It into our mouths, and emboldening us to utter It. It belongs to us, because He has by His minister pronounced it over us, even His Names, since where He is, there is the ever-blessed Trinity; nor is He where They are not. Whence in Holy Scripture it is all one, whether it speaks of being baptised into the Name of the Lord Jesus, or of being baptized into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; it is but another way of speaking of those words of Baptism, which were ever used in the Church, as we still use them, because it was thus commanded by the Lord.

Sad then as it is to speak of, one cannot say that they have a full right to pray in That Name, who in the growing ignorance or carelessness of the ordinances of our Lord, neglect to receive That Name, as He commanded it, in Holy Baptism. For Scripture says, “<sup>q</sup>all who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, have been buried with Christ, have risen with Christ, have been new-created in Christ.” But no where does it give us hope, that they are clad with Him, or have been buried into His Death, who have not, as He bade, been baptized in Him. Would that one could say confidently, that they had a right to use it, who use it out of the One Body, which He formed in one Faith, by One

<sup>p</sup> Acts xix. 15.

<sup>q</sup> Gal. iii. 27. Rom. vi. 3, &c.

Baptism in our One Lord! In better times, schism or division from the Church cut off from the Body of Christ, which the Church is: in whatever degree it does not now, it must be by the sin of the Church; and readily may the Church bear a portion of the sin, either in her neglect to provide for those entrusted to her, or of acting up to her duties, and glorifying her Father by that holiness which should mark her out to be His; if so those now separate from her may not be cut off altogether. And as she shares the sin, so does she share the punishment. For since the promise was made to the One Body formed in the One Name, all must suffer, now that that oneness is broken. One member cannot suffer without the other members suffering with it. The promise was to those who love in Him, are one in Him; since we then are many, and love has been impaired, we have much to fear, lest we have forfeited the fulness of the promise. Enough for our salvation we know that we have ourselves; we trust that all have who, amid an inherited ignorance of the privileges of the Church, believe in that saving Name. Yet it is too likely that all our privileges are impaired by these rents, that the stream of grace no longer runs so richly through all the branches, which are thus torn, though not wholly severed. We have all more reason to pray for the peace and unity of the Church, as suffering ourselves from its disunion. As we are not saved by ourselves, are not members of our Lord by ourselves, but in His Church and the Communion of Saints, so our privileges and the helps to our salvation are, in a mysterious way, wrapped up in the well-being of the

Church. All her sons share probably in the health or sickness of "the mother of us all." To take only this one subject of prayer, since St. Paul so earnestly desired the prayers of his converts; if he, the inspired Apostle, who "had the Spirit of God<sup>r</sup>" and "the mind of Christ<sup>s</sup>," and "spake in Christ," still needed the prayers of others, that he might "speak the mystery of Christ<sup>t</sup>;" if he, "the ambassador in bonds for the Gospel," needed their prayers that he might "speak boldly, as he ought to speak," how must not we all suffer, that the prayers of the Church are so minished, many large portions of the Church never knowingly pray for us at all, although they do pray for us too when they pray for the Holy Catholic Church in which we are! How must we not all suffer since they who pray are lessened, the prayers of those who pray, weakened by lack of love! Certainly Christian life is every where in a maimed state, as well as Christian love. The gathering in of the scattered sheep may not only gladden the forsaken fold, but may, we hope, draw down the gracious look of the Good Shepherd, Who, the more for our earnest prayers, will bring them on His shoulders rejoicing.

But as we must have been brought into Him, so, in order to pray aright in His Name, must we, by obedience as well as by faith, be abiding in Him. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you." Then only do we abide in Him, when His words abide in us, "hidden within our hearts, that we sin not against Him;" abide in us, directing and controlling, urging or restraining, keeping us in the

<sup>r</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 40.

<sup>s</sup> Ib. ii. 16.

<sup>t</sup> Col. iv. 3.

narrow way when we turn to the right hand or to the left, and hastening us on in it. “<sup>u</sup>The foundation of the Lord is sure, having this seal, ‘The Lord knoweth them that are His,’ and ‘Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” God’s seal upon us, whereby He acknowledgeth and taketh knowledge of them that are His, is only then sure, when we keep unbroken that other inscription given by His finger upon us, “let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.” Some sins, we know, as hypocrisy, turn prayer itself into sin; “let his prayer be turned into sin,” “the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,” “he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.” But also every sin is contrary to prayer and a hindrance to it; “<sup>x</sup>if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” It is contrary to the very nature of prayer; since prayer is a dependence upon God, sin seeks happiness out of God; it makes men falter in their prayer, so that they unsay in their hearts what they have said with their lips. “Give me continence,” prayed, in his unbaptized state, he who was afterwards St. Augustine, “only not now.” He prayed for it as a blessing, but shrank from its cost. So too now men often draw back from their prayers: they long to pray, half pray, yet dread the condition which the hearing of their prayers may involve of strictness, hardness, sacrifice, self-denial. They would be of God’s side, yet cannot be wholly. Or, again, they would attain some

<sup>u</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.   <sup>v</sup> Prov. xv. 8.   <sup>w</sup> Ib. xxviii. 9.   <sup>x</sup> Ps. lxvi. 18.



grace, or break off some sin they know of; yet some sin they have hidden from themselves bars them from the grace, and gives the mastery to the sin they loathe. Or they would fain attain the truth, but some hidden defect, vanity, self-opinion, love of praise, or ease, sensuality, covetousness, blinds them to it. I have said "them;" but who amongst us must not sorrowfully own, that his prayers are held back by manifold infirmities, the sad offspring, at best, of his former sins? Who must not long to live "more as he prays," that he may pray more as he ought? Who must not pray to be "delivered from the bonds of those sins which by his frailty he has committed?" Who needs not, to pray to be cleansed from the sins which by unfaithfulness he has hidden from himself, and now are become "secret" to him, that his prayers be not hindered, and his life be not a hindrance to and belie his prayers? And so we have need, not only to pray that we be guided into the truth of doctrine or of life, but also not to rely upon our own prayers too confidently, as though we should of course possess the truth because we pray, while we know not of ourselves whether we are such as are worthy to have "all truth" disclosed to us, whether we have not all the while some darkness in us, which hinders the shining-in of all God's holy truth. Even on this ground may we entrust ourselves the rather to the guidance of God's Church, which we know, and in our Creeds confess, to be "holy," while we sorrowfully confess our own unholiness, and pray the while that God would "v look well whether there be any way of

wickedness in us," and so "lead us in the way everlasting" of faith and life. So when we are holy like her, we shall see also for ourselves the truth committed to her, to be the truth of God. And on this account alone must it be very dangerous to find fault with any thing we find in her, not only lest we be irreverent and break "the first commandment with promise," but lest what we ignorantly blame be just the very truth which is wanting to us, and which some defect in ourselves blinds us from seeing.

As all sin hinders prayer, so, though we trust our prayers shall not be shut out to the loss of our souls, yet is there an endless difference in the efficacy of the prayers of those, of whom we hope with ourselves that their prayers are in their measure accepted. There is then much room for diligence, in that we should help to save others and those we love; but also for ourselves, since one knows not whether the degree of prayer, or faith, or duty, which may be accepted for others, will suffice for ourselves; since it may be, though we know it not, that we are of those to whom much having been given, much will be required of them. As we are, such are our prayers and God's hearing of them. "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you," our Lord saith, "ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be given you." Our access to the Father is through the closeness of our union with the Son; and that union, having been received through Baptism, is upheld through obedience, which is the life of our faith. "If ye keep My commandments," He

<sup>z</sup> S. John xv. 7.

<sup>a</sup> Ib. 10.

saith, "ye shall abide in My love." Every sin in its degree loosens that union; every act of obedience knits it closer, because it admits more of that Holy Spirit through Whom He dwelleth in us, and we in Him. All, who shall be saved, must abide in Him; yet do they abide in Him in different degrees. Some, like Apostles and Martyrs, and doubtless many hidden saints now, whom the world knows not of, or whose outward life alone it can know of, cleave to Him with an ever-glowing love, fruitful in all holy obedience, and conforming the whole man, feature by feature, to the Lord, on Whom they hang with adoring love, Whom alone in all they see, in Whom their whole life is. Most of us, it is to be feared, under their feet, abide, (if by His undeserved goodness we do yet abide,) weakly, uncertainly, unsteadfastly; our hold broken by our many sins and infirmities; our "<sup>b</sup> sins separating between us and our God," so that though "His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor is His ear heavy that it cannot hear, our sins have hid His face from us that He will not hear." "Though we make many prayers," it is a great mercy that some pass through. We are so unlike His Son, Whose imperfect members we yet hope we are, that we scarce dare hope He will look on members so full of decay, so "ready to perish." And so, while the prayers of others may prevail with God for the kingdoms of the world, or for the Church which is "not of this world;" may bind Satan, or loose whom he has bound; may save souls, which have not "<sup>c</sup> sinned unto death;" may obtain free course for the Gospel of God; may close

<sup>b</sup> Isa. lix. 1, 2.

<sup>c</sup> 1 S. John v. 16.

heaven, as Elijah, or open it; may plead with God, as Moses and Phinehas, that He cast not off the people He had chosen; may stop persecutions, hold back the powers of darkness, even when they are about to have rule given them over a guilty land, (as one knows not whose hidden lowly prayers yet hold in check the elements of evil, the lawful offspring of our sins, which an unseen Hand alone hinders from making our homes desolate); ours, even if accepted, may hardly and with difficulty be saving ourselves.

But be it so, there is comfort yet. Be it that the faith and prayers of others may avail much; that "d the prayer of faith" may "heal the sick" in body or in soul; may be "turning many to righteousness," to be their glory and crown while they "e shine as the stars for ever;" and the fresh life and love which God is pouring into His Church may be granted to their fervent righteous prayer, to their endless glory; while we are poor and blind and miserable, our crown forfeited, our birth-right in great part wasted, our hopes and ourselves decayed, our Father's first blessing bestowed on more entire faithful service. Be it that they whom we might have resembled are first, and we last; that we have rather to pray that we be "f saved so as by fire," that the burthen of our many sins may be lightened, our sores healed, our stains blotted out, our leprosy cleansed, the injuries which we have caused to others may be cancelled. Be it that when we pray for others, for our friends, and the Church, (as pray we must) we must be oppressed by the sense of our own utter unworthiness to be

<sup>d</sup> S. James v. 15, &c

<sup>e</sup> Dan. xii. 3.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 15.



heard, there is comfort yet; “<sup>g</sup> Whoso cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Persevere we to the end, week by week, and day by day, through His help, through Whom alone we could have begun or can begin, and in Whose Name we may yet pray, in the covenanted mercies of that Holy Sacrament wherein It was called upon us, and we were made His,—persevere we, day by day, hating and confessing to Him the sins which press upon us, praying for humility and true repentance, and labouring to practise what we pray; praying Him to give us “<sup>h</sup> broken hearts, which He will not despise,” to “wash us thoroughly from our wickedness” in His Blood, and cleanse us from all our sin; and He Who gave us our godly sorrow, will make our sorrow our joy, He will heal our wounds here, or make them healthful to us, as hating thereby the more the sins which made them; and in the end, “<sup>i</sup> they who sow in tears shall reap in joy.” Well might we faint, did we think what endless joy is, the joy of His Holy Countenance, and that we, so sin-defiled, seek to be admitted there, and yet that others shall be shut out! “Well might we faint at the greatness of the rewards,” said a holy man, “did we not consider the dignity of the price paid,” the Blood of Him, Who, being Man, was God! Well might we faint at the sight of our own sins, were not our Physician Almighty! He healed our infirmities by His Life; He bare our sins by His Death; He “<sup>k</sup> is ever at the right hand of God and maketh intercession for us.” Shrink we not then from the daily task of sorrow

<sup>g</sup> S. John vi. 37.<sup>h</sup> Ps. li. 2. 17.<sup>i</sup> Ib. cxxvi. 5.<sup>k</sup> Rom. viii. 34. Heb. vii. 25.

and repentance; so it may be that He Who heareth the cry of the humbled, will hear our prayer, not for ourselves only, but, among others, for those we love or ought to pray for also. Our very sense of unworthiness may render them acceptable in His sight, Who “resisteth the proud and giveth grace unto the humble,” for the sake of His worthiness, at the footstool of Whose mediatorial throne we fall low. Come we to Him, pleading to Him His own Cross and Passion, which He suffered that we might not; praying Him by His own descent into hell, that “<sup>1</sup>the pit may not shut its mouth upon us.” Come we to Him with the words and faith of those, on whom He wrought His cures while on the earth; pray we Him, “Jesu, Master, have mercy on me;” show we Him as our High-Priest the sores we cannot hide from Him as our Judge, and He will look upon us and our leprous spots, and by His compassionate look will heal them, and cleansing them will pronounce them cleansed. He will “<sup>m</sup>forgive all our iniquities, and heal all our diseases.” He will “redeem our life from destruction, and crown us with loving-kindness and tender mercies.” Meanwhile, tarry we His leisure and persevere; “<sup>n</sup>though He tarry, wait for Him, because He will surely come, He will not tarry.” It may be that suffering and suspense is the appointed fire through which He would purge our sins. Seek we, through His grace, to deepen in us all which makes prayer acceptable, a lowly faith, a righteous life, cleaving to Him, persevering trust, and if He seem to hide His face from us, it will but be, that, praying the more earnestly,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxix. 15.<sup>m</sup> Ib. ciii. 3.<sup>n</sup> Hab. ii. 3.

He may hear us the more ; though, as He tried the Canaanitish woman, He seem to deny us, yet, if following her faith, we own ourselves as dogs, unfit to have the children's bread, He will say to us, at the last, "Be it unto thee according to thy word ;" if we seek to be but hired servants, He will at the last make us once more sons.

Only remember we, that charity and fasting are the wings of prayer ; fasting as a token and means of self-abasement, charity to man as a token of our love to God, Whom we see not, and drawing down His ineffable love to us through Whom we love ; charity in forgiving wrong ; charity in showing mercy in our prayers, as we hope to have others' prayers for us ; charity especially in self-denying almsgiving to Christ's poor. So forgiving, may we be at last forgiven ; being "merciful," we may at the last "obtain mercy ;" giving, it shall be "given to us, good measure, pressed down and shaken together, shall they give into our bosom," even the overflowing love of God, which He will pour into the hearts of those who love in Him, opening them by His love to receive His love, even Himself, Who is Love.

• S. Luke vi. 37, 38.

## SERMON XII.

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### DISTRACTIONS IN PRAYER.

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Hebrews v. 7.

*“ Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him That was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.”*

SUCH is the pattern which He, Who is our Pattern, gives us of acceptable effectual prayer. He knew that He should be heard. “I know,” He saith, “that Thou hearest Me always<sup>a</sup>,” when yet He had gone “groaning in Himself” to the grave of Lazarus; and yet the more, because He should be heard, did He with intense suffering, with strong and mighty crying and tears, offer up His prayers and supplications. And “He was heard in that He feared.” He knew, as God, that, as Man, He should be heard; yet as Man, He withdrew Himself from none of the sufferings of awe, and earnest reverent dread, which attends impending, yet unaccomplished, trial; His Godhead sustained the sufferings of His Manhood, but superseded them not. This, too, was prophesied of Him: the Psalms

<sup>a</sup> S. John xi. 42.



which express the deepest agony of prayer, are those which shadow forth His prayers ; which, while they were the prayers of those, who in old times offered them, of David and the rest of the suffering saints of God, had yet, in the Mind of the Holy Ghost, through Whom they prayed them, and vented their unutterable groanings, a deeper, intenser meaning, and so became of a twofold character ; in part and on the surface they were their prayers in Him, Whose sufferings they dimly foreshadowed, and our's in Him our Head ; in the deepest, fullest meaning, they are His, and are those of the Church now, only because in Him. What a picture, then, do they give of intense, suffering prayer ! How do the strong crying and tears, of which the Apostle speaks, re-echo through them !

To view them as patterns of earnest prayer. In their words He clothed that unutterable agony, when, bearing the Father's wrath for us, He endured to be forsaken by the Father, and uttered that mysterious cry, the depths whereof none but Himself can ever (one must think) wholly understand, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Or again, to look on prayer only as suffering, since we think it much if it is not all joy ; "I am weary of My crying ; My throat is dry ; Mine eyes fail, while I wait for My God<sup>b</sup>:" "By reason of My groaning, My bones cleave to My skin<sup>c</sup>:" as in the other Psalms, "They tell all My bones ;" or again, "I have roared by reason of the disquietness of My heart. My groaning is not hid from Thee : My heart panteth, My strength

<sup>b</sup> Ps. lxi. 3.<sup>c</sup> Ib. cii. 5.

faileth; the light of Mine eyes, it also is gone from Me;" or of the continuance of the prayer, "I have cried day and night unto Thee," as we know He continued all night in prayer to God: yea, He says of Himself, "I am prayer<sup>d</sup>;" His very Being was one Prayer.

But the Psalms, in that they are adapted to us, are witnesses to us how we should pray; they have a lower sense, in which, imperfect as we are, we can still use them; while we should be tending upward toward that higher meaning in which they belong to Him in Whom we are.

Or to take again eminent types of Him; how strangely great was that mysterious action of the Patriarch Jacob, when he wrestled with the Angel until the break of day, and "by his strength he had power with God; he wept, and made supplication unto Him; He found him in Bethel, and there He spake with us;" i. e., included us also in the blessing of Israel, if we are true children of Israel. Nay, we take to ourselves often the pattern of Jacob, and speak of his "wrestlings" being realized now; again bearing witness to ourselves how fervent our prayers should be. Or again, how intense the prayer of Hannah, that even to Eli the priest, she seemed, from the excess of her silent emotion, like one beside herself with strong drink.

And yet with such patterns even under the Old Covenant, such models and words provided for us, our Lord Himself giving us both the pattern to pray, and the words to utter, and His Name wherein to offer them, and His Spirit whereby to utter them, and

<sup>d</sup> Ps. cix. 4.

<sup>e</sup> Hos. xii. 3, 4.

Himself presenting our prayers, cleansed with His own Blood, what are our prayers? Heavy, for the most part, and earthly; often we are unwilling to begin them, readily falling in with some plea, why we should not pray now, readily ceasing. And well may we have no pleasure in prayers such as we too often offer. Unwilling to begin, distracted as we go on, glad to make an end, what a picture this of children coming to an All-bountiful and gracious Father, to have what they ask for! And yet is it not too true? How many prayers in any Church are uttered while the heart is far away! How many come hither, without thinking in earnest about praying at all, of the sermon rather than of the prayers! Or they will not come when prayer alone is offered, even if it be (as in this place<sup>f</sup>) those deep supplications of our Litany, which bring before our God all our manifold wants, in that contrite spirit, which may most hope to be heard. Or they think that they can pray of themselves, without any great effort, or any special aid of God: and these, of course, must fail to pray. Or of those who really desire to pray, how many have their minds so little controlled at other times, or so thronged with the things of this life, that the thoughts of the world pour in upon them, when they would pray; and when people come to themselves, they find that while their knees have remained bent, where they were, they themselves have been far away, in their counting-house or their shop, their cards or their society, talking or acting, competing with a neighbour, or disputing; advancing or aggrandizing themselves, it may be,

<sup>f</sup> Preached where the Sermon was in the afternoon Service.

while in posture they were remaining humble before God; or resenting a fancied injury, while they were praying forgiveness of their sins; busied about the things of time and sense, while, by coming before God at all, they were professing that what alone concerns them is Eternity. Would they could have been so long away! but “<sup>g</sup> whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence?” Rather, we have been there in the presence of God, under His Eye, by our own act inviting that Eye, Which is ever upon us, to regard us; and then in His temple, our mind, setting up our idols, “<sup>h</sup> every man in the chamber of his imagery,” and offering incense to them. “Go in,” saith God to His prophet, “and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.” “So I went in and saw; and beheld every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about.” It is shocking and hideous to ourselves, to think what thoughts have been present with us, when we and they together were in the very Presence of God; and self was in some way the idol which we were worshipping, when we were making the show of serving God. And if so to us, whose faculties have been deadened by our sins and our evil habits, what must we have been in His sight! How again, in another and a better sort, will the very words of the prayers which they are using, carry their minds off to some train of thought, and they find that the prayers have been going on without them, and they

<sup>g</sup> Ps. cxxxix. 7.<sup>h</sup> Ezek. viii. 12.



have perhaps been following the words with their eyes, thinking about the words in their prayer, or about the prayer, rather than offering it; speculating about the things of God, instead of praying to Him, as if the things of God were subjects only to occupy their thoughts, and they themselves were not there before Him, sinners, to ask forgiveness of our sins; criminals, to ask our Judge not to pass sentence upon us; guilty of His law and of its penalties, and praying not to be cast for ever into Hell. So that persons have been even afraid at the end to pray God to "grant effectually" what they have "asked faithfully," fearing lest they have asked little or nothing "faithfully," and they bring a curse upon themselves and not a blessing; or to say to God, "Who hast given us grace with one accord to make our common supplications unto Thee," fearing that they have not had that grace given unto them, or if so,—which is worse, have received it in vain.

And if this be so with those who come to Church, what must be the case with those who are openly profane and come not, or come carelessly and irregularly? For since all prayer depends on His aid, Who "poureth out the Spirit of prayer and supplication," that "Spirit Who maketh intercession for us," how can they expect that God will bestow It upon them morning and evening, who at other times despise His Ordinances, or who, going to the business of the day, utter hurriedly a prayer, to satisfy their consciences rather than to obtain what they ask for, not because time is not allowed them for more, but because they will not make it? Not

that it is not better to pray in any way almost, than not to pray at all; to pray more than to pray less. All neglect of devotion is open neglect of God and independence of Him; and so any prayer, however imperfect, or however little it have of the character of prayer, is better than neglect of prayer altogether, since it does retain some dependence upon God, which they who pray not at all cast aside. Alas! If we be such at our best, what must we be at our worst? If we be such, when we should be most awed, what must we be, when most unrestrained? If we be such, when by our own act we have confessed ourselves in God's immediate Presence, and must, if at any time, be most conscious of it, what when we are professedly amid the things of the world, and employed about them? If they thus engage us, when removed from them to another world, what when our very thoughts are on this?

Yet, miserable as this is, there is no way at once to be free. Slowly, year by year, and day by day, did we bring this hard bondage upon ourselves, and slowly only may we hope that it will be removed from off our necks. Yet the way in which we brought it upon ourselves, may show us the way in which we may hope to have it lightened. And praised be God, it is lightened, though not at once, yet in some measure, when we in earnest wish it; at least, some foretaste is given us, that it will be lightened. If we be yet in darkness, some gleams of light break through; though we see not the Sun, nor where He is, even beneath the clouds it is lighter around us. Some prayers are from the first given us more free; some liftings up of the heart

to God, which before we knew not of; some hidden "drawings," as we hope, "of the Father," which seem like beams of His countenance, and make us feel lighter and gladsome; something which, being unlike any thing of this earth, we trust is of Heaven.

But, while we have gracious undeserved encouragements to persevere, the steps must be slow. Step by step, we sunk amid the distractions of the world, and step by step only may we hope that our Father will raise us out of the mire wherein we plunged ourselves. But our first step, the very beginning and condition of our restoration, is to unlearn the distractions whereby we have been beset. In seeking to remedy our distractions, our first labour must be to amend ourselves. Such as we are at other times, such will our prayers be. God helps us in our prayers, as without Him we cannot pray; but He doth so in proportion as we admit His aid in the rest of our life. We cannot pray as we ought, unless we live as we ought. Our prayers will partake of our other infirmities. We cannot at once collect ourselves, and become other men in the Presence of God, from what we were just before. If we are in earnest, we are, of course, in a higher state when we place ourselves consciously in the Presence of Almighty God; we must become, in a degree, awed, subdued, respectful; we are on our knees; and the unwonted attitude tells people they are on a business other than that of this life; they have been accustomed so to ask of God, since in their purified and unstained infancy they knelt by their mother's knees; and they feel that if they ask not, then the time

for obtaining what they are there to ask will be past; when they rise, a duty will have been done or left undone; yet, though raised for the time above their ordinary selves, they are themselves still. The Pharisee was less proud than at other times, in that he thanked God for what he was; he acknowledged it was His gift, but he was proud still. A person cannot be full of cares, and riches, and pleasures, and enjoyments, and vanities of this life, up to the very moment when he falls down at God's footstool, and leave these companions of his other hours behind him, so that they will not thrust themselves in with him into the Holy Presence. "A dream cometh through the multitude of business;" and whoso has his thoughts at other times thronged with the manifold concerns of this life, must needs be in a confused dreamy state, when he appears before God. We are only to a certain degree in our own power; we have it in our own power, by the covenanted help of God, to do, one by one, the single acts, by which we become what we are; and having neglected that help, we still, by His undeserved mercy, have it in our power, slowly by repentance to undo what we have become, so long as the same grace is continued to us. But we have not, at any given time, the power to act contrary to the habits we have formed and are continually forming: by our own act we became such; but we cannot at once help (and it is a very awful thing) the very evil, from which but for our own fault we might have been free. We cannot keep our thoughts disengaged at prayer, if they are

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. v. 3.



through the day engaged ; we cannot keep out vain thoughts then, if at other times we yield to them. The thoughts, to which we have been accustomed during the day, rush in upon us before we are aware, and carry us away. They master us then, because we have yielded to them before ; they bind us, as lawful captives, because we have before sold ourselves to them, and taken their wages and their yoke, and have delivered ourselves into their hands. We must live more to God, if we would pray more to God ; we must be less engrossed with the world, if we would not have the world thrust itself in upon our prayers and stifle them. He who lives to the world, and he who lives to God, must do mostly the same things ; but with the one, the things themselves are the end ; with the other, to please God in them. If a duty, to be performed well, must for the time needs take up wellnigh all our thoughts, yet is there to the holy, all the while, a consciousness of the Presence of God, as the unseen Light of his life, just as in this bodily world we may have our eyes fixed on some object of sense, yet we are conscious of the presence of the light of the world. We need not fear lest our duties should be done less thoroughly, if done more calmly, and not for their own sakes but for God's. Rather, in that they are done in God, they will be done more as God wills ; self and the wrong bias of our minds will be removed ; they will be done truly and rightly, since they will be "wrought in God," Who is Truth and Right.

This, then, is the chief, the most comprehensive remedy against distraction in prayer, to see that we

be not distracted amid the manifoldness of the things of sense, at other times ; that we make not any thing in this world our end, that we seek not our happiness in it, follow it not eagerly, be not passionately fond of any thing ; else we make it our god, and what we have allowed ourselves to be captivated with, i. e., held captive by, will hold our thoughts captive in our prayers too, and bind them down to itself, and will not let them soar freely to our God. We must make our choice. If we *will* be anxious about worldly things, we cannot pray as we ought, though we would.

But still further, even when we would serve God, or do our duty in this life, we must see that we do our very duties calmly. There is a religious, as well as a worldly, distraction. We may mix up self in doing duty, as well as when we make self our end. Religious excitement, or excitement about things of religion, may as effectually bar our praying as eagerness about worldly things. We may be engaged about the things of God, yet our mind may all the while centre in these things, not in God. Sad as it is, people may be engaged in the progress of religion or of truth, (it is shocking to say it, yet worse that people should fall into it unwarned,) much as persons looking on a game or engaged in one ; nay, the temptation is the greater, in that the interests are the more absorbing, and persons themselves are more off their guard, because the subject and the cause are in themselves holy, and it is good to be interested in them, only in a right way. We may be diligent about the duties of our calling, and yet find our pleasure and our reward simply in our

success or ingenuity in doing them dexterously. Nay, there is no more frequent snare than doing *what* we ought, but not *as* we ought; putting worldly activity in place of religious diligence. Thus people, in providing for their families, which is a duty, become worldly. In serving the state, which may be a duty, they become ambitious; in doing well what they have to do (which they ought,) they become vain; in some way putting self in the place of God. Whatever then be our employment, doing the duty of our callings, or seeking to promote God's truth, or doing good to man, or to prepare, if it may be, for the coming of His kingdom, as citizens or as members of the Church, we must see that we do it soberly, labouring to have our minds fixed, not on the things themselves, but on God, that we look through them to Him for Whom we do them. If our mind be in a whirl, hearing, thinking, speaking, about many things, it matters not whether they relate to the world or the Church, it will be dizzy and distracted, i. e., torn asunder among them when we come to our prayer; and we shall not be able to fix it. If we will be busied and careful about many things, we cannot do the one thing needful, sit at Jesus' feet and hear His words. And hence Holy Scripture joins these two together, calmness or sobriety and prayer; "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer<sup>k</sup>." "<sup>1</sup>Let your *moderation* be known unto all men. Be anxious for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God—shall guard your hearts and thoughts

<sup>k</sup> 1 S. Pet. iv. 7.<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 5.

in Christ Jesus." Peace is the beginning and end of prayer; its condition and its reward. Resign yourselves, that ye may pray, and God will guard your thoughts, and hold them to Himself.

If, also, you would guard against wandering in prayer, you must practise yourself in keeping a check upon your thoughts at other times. If, as Scripture saith of the fool, our "eyes are in the ends of the earth," if we let our senses wander after every thing which presents itself to them, we are forming in ourselves a habit of distraction, which will oppress us in our prayers too. It is not a light matter that we be gazing on every thing which we can see, that we listen to all we may hear, that we keep all the avenues of our senses open, and let what will enter in. Rather Holy Scripture so often says, "They lift up their eyes," as if we should not for ever be gazing around us, but keep them rather staid, until we need them. The compass of our mind is narrow at best, and cannot hold many things; one thing thrusts out another; and if we admit these manifold things into our mind, we shall have small room for its true and rightful Owner and Inmate, God. If we let thoughts chase each other through our minds at will, they will find their accustomed entrance there in our prayers too; if we close not the doors of our minds against them at other times, they will stand wide open then. In this busy age, in which every one would know about every thing, and, like the Athenians, our occupation seems to be to know some new thing, and what conveys news is thought the instrument of knowledge, and knowledge of every sort is thought a good, it is not a light matter,



but one to which we must take great heed ; what we hear, and admit into our minds. Our minds are holy things ; they are the temples of God ; and so, for His honour's sake Who has so hallowed them, we should be on our guard what we allow to enter there. We are commanded to beware of idle-speaking ; beware we also of things which foster it, idle-hearing and idle-seeing, and knowledge of idle things. As life draws towards its close, God dulls our eyes and ears and all our senses, that, being thus shut out from the outer world, our minds may the more retire from the world, withdraw into their own sanctuary, and there be occupied with Him, and prepare to meet Him. Be this method of His Providence a guide to us. Keep the rein over your own minds ; control them ; master them ; check them, for the very sake of keeping them in check ; so shall you the better have them in your power in your prayers too. Be not curious about things which concern you not, what happens in the street, or passes by you, or befalls a neighbour, unless charity require it of you. These things waste the mind more than you can well think. Rather recollect that your concern is not with the world ; your home, your hopes, your abiding-place, is not here, but in God ; your citizenship is not on earth, but in the Heavens ; your places here shall shortly know you no more ; the earth shall contain no more of you, than the dust of your bodies, in keeping for you against the Resurrection. Why then so curious about what is nothing to you ? Why, alas, but because the mind must be filled with something, and unless it be filled with God, it must deaden its cravings with the nothingnesses of this life ?

But, on that very ground, if it be so filled, it empties itself of God, and, being void of God, cannot pray to God, since prayer is the voice of God within us to Himself.

Then, on the other hand, as we seek, during the day, to weaken the hold which the world has upon us and our thoughts, so must we by His grace to strengthen our own capacity of turning to God. Away from the world and to God! To prevent the world having the mastery over you in your prayers, seek that the world be to you penetrated with God, speak to you of God. "Whether ye eat or whether ye drink," says Holy Scripture, "or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him<sup>m</sup>." Labour that, whatever ye do, no matter how small and trivial, ye do as He wills and because He wills it. Commit to Him thoughts, words, and works, to be "ordered by His governance, to do that is righteous in His sight;" to be "begun, continued, and ended" in Him. Speak or refrain from speaking, eat or eat not, drink or drink not, labour or rest, with a view to Him, having Him in your eye, seeking aid from Him to do whatever you do, aright. Thank Him if you have ease or joy; resign yourself to Him, if you have sorrow or pain; seek to Him, if you have temptation; ask His guidance, if in perplexity; make it an end with you, to have Him in all your thoughts. So when you come to your fuller and more set devotions, you may hope that He, Whom you serve continually, will keep you

<sup>m</sup> Col. iii. 17.

then also, and will vouchsafe Himself to visit you, and be in your thoughts, which you would fain make His, and will shut out the world by filling your thoughts with Himself.

It is the infrequency of prayer which makes prayer so difficult. It is not a great effort now and then, which makes the things even of this life easy to us; it is their being the habit of our bodies or our minds. It was by continued exercise which we were not aware of, that our bodies, as children, were strengthened; it was by continued practice that we learnt any thing. By continued gazing at far-off objects, the eye sees further than others; by continued practice, the hand becomes steadied and obeys the motions of our mind. So and much more must the mind, by continual exercise, be steadied, to fix itself on Him Whom it cannot grasp, and look up to Him Whom it cannot see. Yea, so much the more exceedingly must it with strong effort fix itself by His grace on Him, because we cannot see Him or approach to Him, but by His revealing Himself and coming down to us, and giving us eyes to see and hearts to comprehend; and this He will do only to the earnest and persevering, and to us severally, as we are such. They then will pray best, who, praying truly, pray oftenest. Prayer is a being with God. A Christian's life is a continual prayer. He who is with God most at other times, will be most with Him then; he whose thoughts most rise to God amid his daily business, will find them rise most easily to Him, when prayer itself becomes his business. And this was part of the wisdom of the Ancient Church, in fixing certain hours for briefer

prayers during the day,—nine, twelve, three, the hours of the descent of the Holy Ghost, the crucifixion of our Lord, His precious Death,—not only to fix saving truths in our mind, and multiply prayer, but also to carry us on through the day in prayer, that so we might live more in and on prayer, i. e., in and on God, and pray to Him more heartily at the times of fuller prayer, and have Him more in our hearts, as not having had our thoughts during the day estranged from Him. This, also, is one great blessing of the practice of ejaculatory prayer, that is, prayer which is darted up from the mind in the little intervals which occur, whatever we are doing. Nothing goes on without breaks, to leave us space to turn to God. Amid conversation there is silence; in the busiest life there are moments, if we would mark them, when we must remain idle. We are kept waiting, or we must hear what is wearisome; let prayer take the place of impatience. In preparing for business, let prayer take the place of eagerness; in closing it, of self-satisfaction. Are we weary? be it our refreshment! Are we strong? let us hallow our strength by thanksgiving! The very preparation or close of any business brings with it of necessity a pause, teaching us by this very respite to begin and end with prayer; with prayer beforehand for His help, or at the end thanksgiving to Him Who carried us through it, or for pardon for what has been amiss in it. Nay, our ordinary duties for the most part may go on mechanically, without much attention on our part. We find that we can converse amidst them, discuss the concerns of our neighbours or what relates not to ourselves



amidst them without hindrance. Why not what alone concerns us, seek our peace with God and His mercy, His help and salvation? We are formed to be unable to continue long any exertion of body or mind without breathing-space; we must pause and take breath to begin afresh; why not breathe to and in Him, Who is the Breath of our life, and rest in Him Who is the Rest of the weary? People can sing during their work, and feel themselves refreshed by it; why not "one of the songs of Zion?" In so many ways would God teach us not to be engrossed with the duties and business of this life, but amid all to find a place for thoughts of Him, and of our endless life with Him in heaven, or, if without Him, in hell. He Himself commands, "Thou shalt talk of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." He has His own in every station of life, whose bodies perhaps are busied about the meanest occupations, but their thoughts are on Him, the Most High. The body has been sweeping the streets, the soul aloft among the golden streets of our heavenly Jerusalem, and with the Lamb Who lighteneth it <sup>n</sup>.

Such are some of the more distant preparations for prayer, such as it should be, fixed and earnest; to strive to make God, not the world, the end of our lives; not to be taken up even with our duties in the world, but amid them to seek Him; to sub-

<sup>n</sup> A man employed in sweeping the street was overheard speaking to his fellow, out of the latter chapters of the Revelation, which he had learnt, of "the streets of pure gold." "What comfort could I have," he said, "but in thinking of them?"

due self, and put a restraint upon our senses at other times, that we may have the control over them then; to lift our thoughts to Him at other times, so will they rise more readily then.

These are, in their very nature, slowly learnt. Yet as, if wholly learnt, it were Heaven itself, so is each step, a step Heavenwards. Each wish to pray is a breath from Heaven, to strengthen and refresh us; each act of faith, done to amend our prayers, is wrought in us by Him, and draws us to Him, and His gracious look on us. Each amends our prayers, and our amended prayers are His gift to amend our lives, and so we may go on, in slow, it may be, through our manifold infirmities, yet ceaseless progress, until we find in His gracious and merciful Presence the end of our prayers, our faith, our hopes, our lives.

Yet there are many more immediate helps, at the very time of prayer, of which I may mention some few, if so be some may find herein what may be of use to them. Neglect nothing which can produce reverence. Pass not at once from the things of this world to prayer, but collect thyself. Think what thou art, what God is; thyself a child, and God thy Father; but also thyself dust and ashes, God, a consuming fire, before Whom angels hide their faces: thyself unholy, God holy; thyself a sinner, God thy Judge. And to this it will help, before you first pray, reverently to repeat your Belief, as confessing before God, all He has wrought for you, and His own Majesty; or as they did of old, to think of the last four things, Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell; what thou hopest, everlasting

life; what thou fearest, unceasing misery; what thou needest, God's pardoning, preventing, assisting, perfecting grace, to save thee from the one, and along a strait and narrow path to guide thee to the other; nay further yet, God's help, that thou mayest fear the one and hope for the other; for the very power to dread hell, or to hope for Heaven, is itself a great gift of God. Then forget not, that of thyself thou canst not pray. Without His softening grace Heaven and hell might stand before us, and we could not pray. There have been who have seen hell before them, clear as any object of man's sight, and could not pray. We come before Him, as helpless creatures, who need to be taught what to ask for, and knowing, to be enabled to ask, and asking, to be enabled to persevere to ask. If we think we can pray of ourselves, we cannot pray. Then, as it should be among our last prayers at night, that God should be in our waking thoughts, and that, when we wake up, we should be with God, so we should be very watchful, how we allow the things of the world to enter into our minds, before our first prayers. We wake morning by morning to a new life. The cares and thoughts of yesterday have been buried in our sleep; the world around us is still hushed; the turmoil of life is not yet come back to haunt us. We should deal reverently then with our first thoughts, beware how we awaken in ourselves any of the trains of plans, or business, or occupations, which take up our day. They are yet at a distance from us, and we have more power over them. Stop their first inroad. Turn from them resolutely

to God, before one thought have awakened its fellow; that so thou mayest secure undisturbed thy first prayers, wherein thou committest thy whole self, soul, body, spirit, for the day to God. Then watch thyself, what helps or hinders thee to fix thy mind on God. At times, the mind pours itself out to God, when closing the eyes on the outward world, it fixes itself directly upon God. At times, it prays best, by rivetting the eyes on the words of its prayer, making the very senses, which would distract us, the means of fixing the yet more wandering mind itself. At times, we pray best silently; at times, the hearing of the sound of our own prayer impresses it on the mind. If we fail in one way, we should betake ourselves to another, and so God, seeing us in earnest, will the rather have mercy upon us. Then as to the words of our prayer; we should beware how we pass hastily over any of our prayers. It is not how much we say, but what we pray, which is of real moment. If we are not really masters of our own time, it were better to say but a portion of our prayers, resolving to use what after-time we can find for the rest, than to crowd in more than we can pray aright. It is better to delay some, than, by hurrying, to risk the loss of all; but better still, to pray God to waken us at the time of prayer, and ourselves rise that we may have time. Then, the best models of prayer consist of brief petitions, as suited to men in need; for when they really feel their need, they use not many words. "Lord, save us, we perish," is the cry of need. And so the petitions of the pattern of all prayer, our Lord's, are very short, but each contain-



ing manifold prayers. So are the Psalms in prayer or praise; "blot out all mine iniquities," "create in me a new heart," "cast me not away from Thy Presence," "save me by Thy Name." Such are our own primitive prayers; collects, litany, sentences, asking much in few words. Even our longest prayer "for the Church Militant" is made up in fact of a number of separate prayers. Of our private devotions, such is that of one called "a Saint in his closet," Bp. Andrewes. In this way we may collect our strength and attention for each petition, and so pray on, step by step, through the whole, resting at each step on Him, Who alone can carry us to the end, and if, by human frailty, we be distracted, sum up briefly with one strong concentrated effort what we have lost by wandering.

In public prayer, the case is different. For here, if we wander, the prayers meanwhile go on, and we find that we have lost a portion of our daily bread; that God's Church on earth has been praising with Angels and Archangels and the Church in Heaven, while we have been bringing our sheep and our oxen and our money-changing, the things of this life, into God's Presence, and the Court of Heaven. Yet the remedies are the same, and we have even greater helps. For here, if we would but strive to bring it home to ourselves, is God's more immediate Presence, in the house which is called by His Name; here are the holy Angels with their "golden censers" "offering the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne°;" here especially is He, Who promised to be "in the midst,

where two or three are gathered together in His Name." The majesty of the place may well awe us into devotion, and will aid us to it, if we waste not its impressiveness by our negligence or frivolity; if we demean ourselves here as in God's Presence, enter it and leave it reverently, not exchanging worldly compliments, but acting as though we saw His Eye on us. Then also for ourselves, recollect we, that our Lord's-Day services, as our days, are numbered. To most of us, they are our chief and fullest devotions of this life, and so our chief preparation for the endless worship of Heaven; they are means of gathering strength for our six days of toil, of knitting on week to week in one holy company, of hallowing our week to God with Whom we begin. But they are also beginnings of the employment of Heaven, which they shadow forth. We here faintly practise the first imperfect notes of that endless song, which is to sound on for ever. At most, we have but few of them; a few fifties of these days of rest over, and we must have gained our endless rest or missed it. A few fifties of these solemn services, and we must have closed all the confessions, cries for mercy, prayers, tears, which shall avail then: the door will be shut to for us, and we admitted or shut out for ever. We know not what we do when we waste one of them; and so we should enter this holy place, impressing on ourselves, that we have herein a treasure offered us, of which but few more are in store for us, and which, if wasted, is lost for ever. Come we then calmly to this holy place, not thinking or speaking, up to its very threshold, of things of earth, but as

men bent on a great service, where much is at stake; coming to a Holy Presence, from Whom depends our all. Pray we, as we enter it, that God would guard our thoughts and compose our minds and fix them on Him. Employ we any leisure before the service begins, in thought or private prayer; guard we our eyes from straying to those around us; listen we reverently to His holy word; use the pause before each prayer to ask God to enable us to pray this prayer also; and so pray each separate prayer, as far as we can, relying on His gracious aid; beware we, how we let the mind relax, as though some prayers—those which God has especially commanded, for kings and those in authority—were of less importance to us. For this has often been the first inlet and occasion of distraction; and yet God has especially enjoined these prayers, and He has annexed a blessing to them, “that we may lead a peaceable and godly life.” Ills, which people so readily complain of in governments, may be the punishment of their own coldness in these prayers, which are an act of dutiful charity, since kings are for our sakes exposed to especial dangers and trials which we are freed from. Strive we to pray, as we should serve God, with all our heart and all our mind; and He will graciously help our infirmities, and accept our longings, and hear, we may even hope, what we longed to pray for, but failed. If we have wandered, let us, as soon as we perceive it, collect ourselves with all our might; and when the “Amen” comes, let us seek to gather into one the petitions of the prayer, and crave, by a hearty assent, to be al-

lowed to join in that which by our own frailty we have missed. Prayer for pardon should close all our prayers, and if, when we return home, we could find some intervals for praying anew the substance of prayers, which in public we missed, God would doubtless join us on with His faithful worshippers. He will look favourably on our earnestness, and strengthen us for the future.

Yet we are not to think that by these or any other remedies distraction is to be cured at once. We cannot undo at once the habit, it may be, of years. We must be content to drag with us the chain of our former sins; thankful that God in any degree lightens it and enables us to hold on in our course. Distraction has distressed eminent saints; how much more such as we! Only it is likely that they were more shocked by one worldly thought intruding upon the Holy Presence, than we by many. Distraction will come through weakness, ill-health, fatigue: only pray, guard, strive, against it; humble yourselves under it, and for the past negligences, of which it is mostly the sad fruit; rely less upon yourself, cast yourself more upon God, hang more wholly upon Him, and long the more for that blessed time, when the redeemed of the Lord shall serve Him day and night without distraction.

So may the distractions, the fruits of our former infirmities, or messengers wherewith Satan, for our sins, is permitted to buffet us, turn the rather to our salvation. God needeth not our weak prayers, as neither doth He need us. He "knoweth our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in



asking;" He will give us, we trust, "what for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask," if we seek of Him to heal us for His worthiness, and give sight to our blindness. It is we, who need to hang on Him, as by our imperfect prayers we do, and by doing, learn to do; and this we may learn to do, out of our very miseries; not looking upon them as though necessary evils, but as withdrawals of God's grace, that we may seek that grace more lowly; ashamed and confounded that we cannot pray, and so confessing our confusion and shame and transgressions, that He may forgive us the iniquity of our sin; ashamed that we are so little sons, as approaching our Father with so little love, and so returning as repentant prodigals, whom, though a great way off, our merciful Father will own; ashamed that we have not "the offering of a free heart to give," and cannot "praise His Name, because it is so comfortable," and so offering to Him "a broken and contrite heart, which He will not despise."

So, confessing our misery and shame and sin, may He clothe us all with the garb best fitted to our state, the clothing of humility, and when He hath by death unclothed us of sin and frailty and mortality, clothe us anew at the last day with that His "best robe" of immortality, even Him, Whom we put on in Baptism, and in Whom, frail as we are, we trust to be found abiding, "our iniquities blotted out, and our sin covered."

## SERMON XIII.

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### BAPTISM THE GROUND AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION <sup>a</sup>.

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St. Mark x. 13, 14.

*“And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them ; and His disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God.”*

WE have been accustomed to allege these words in behalf of the Catholic practice of Infant Baptism ; and rightly, for they have been always so understood by the Church, and the voice of the Church Universal is that of the Lord. The Anabaptist and the Socinian are obviously so far wrong, that they urge that the word used does not denote “infants ;” since, although that employed by St. Matthew and St. Mark *may* be applied to children old enough to know good and evil, St. Luke was directed by God to use one<sup>b</sup> which can only signify “infants,” “sucklings,” in its strictest sense. By taking together

<sup>a</sup> Preached in aid of a Diocesan Society, for the Religious Education of the Poor.

<sup>b</sup> βρέφη.

the teaching of the different Gospels, we learn that children of all ages may be brought to Christ in Baptism, not infants only; yet if infancy should (in disobedience to the Church) have been unhappily passed over, that they may still be brought. One must, of course (and may without anxiety), allow that there is no mention of Baptism in the whole passage, and that the children were brought, not to be baptized, but that Jesus might lay His hands upon them, and pray over them. Whence such people would infer that no sanction is hence derived to any Baptism of children of any sort. This were true according to that wilful and disobedient way of treating God's Word, which will find in its sayings only the least which can be found in them; and perhaps it may be a sign of something wrong about ourselves, that, in maintaining the claim of our infants to Holy Baptism, we have of late so often shrunk from alleging proofs of this sort, and have argued rather, that it was *likely* so to be, because the type of Baptism, Circumcision, took place in infancy, or because whole households were baptized by the Apostles, and that in these probably some were little ones; instead of going at once to the authority of the Church Catholic. "Baptize also your infants<sup>c</sup>," says an ancient writing<sup>d</sup>, speaking the sense of the Greek Church, "and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of God. For He saith, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." And in the Latin Church of old times (as in our own), in the Baptismal Service for

<sup>c</sup> *νήπια*.<sup>d</sup> Apost. Constit. vi. 15.

infants<sup>e</sup>, they read this history out of one of the three Gospels, as their Lord's sanction of their act of charity.

Thus authorized, then, to interpret this passage of the Baptism of our infants, we may find in it much confirmation of our faith, and answer to doubting questions. For they who brought them, and they who would have kept them away, are, many ways, types of us. They who brought them, brought them ignorantly (as must all our approaches to God be), not knowing what benefit they should receive, or Who it was of Whom they asked it, and little imagining its greatness, and that He, Whose touch they sought for their little ones, was Very God. Yet doubtless they had seen that touch effectual in healing the sick, casting out devils, and so they trusted that some holy, or healing influence, would pass from His touch into *their* children. Again, they did it ignorantly, in that they thought it necessary that our Lord should "pray over them," and could not of Himself impart the life which in Himself He had. Yet our Lord accepted their faith, and compassionated their ignorance. By granting their wish that He should touch them, He showed His goodwill to accomplish all which they, knowing or unknowing, wished for. In that He prayed not over them, but blessed them, He manifested the power inherent in Himself. In that He not merely, as they wished, touch-

<sup>e</sup> This portion of St. Mark's Gospel is directed to be read in a Pontifical of Poitiers, 900 years old (Assem. Cod. Lit. i. 67); that of St. Matthew in one of Remiremont, 800 years old; as also in our own services of York and Sarum.



ed them, but took them up in His arms, He declared His purpose to do more for those we bring to Him, than our faint hearts and trembling faith can realize or ask for. So, on the other hand, the disciples who rebuked those who brought them might in human sight well seem justified. They argued just as those who speak against the Baptism of our infants do now. Our Lord was declaring deep and hidden mysteries, "of those who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heaven's sake;" He had just said, "he that is able to receive it, let him receive it." "*Then*," St. Matthew adds, "were there brought unto Him young children." What had these (His disciples would ask) to do with the mysteries of the kingdom of God? What good should the word do to them, who could not understand it? How should our Lord, by His touch, benefit those who had no bodily diseases to be healed of? why should the Master and Teacher be troubled and interrupted in His office by such petitions? To human reason they would seem justified, and the parents who sought our Saviour's touch for their little ones, might seem condemned of superstition; just as many, if they ventured to speak plainly, would or do say, 'what good can it do to sprinkle a little water over an unconscious infant? how does it thereby become other than before? what change do we see in it?' And so our Lord mercifully for ever corrected both our judgements. The one had brought them, as to a Physician, for His touch; and He, in that He complied with their wish, taught them of a deeper-rooted disease than they knew of, even that birth-

sin, which their very birth had entailed upon them, and which, unless cut off, must end in their entire death. He taught them that He took upon Himself its cure, and would in very infancy make them whole, and that their action was truer and had a deeper meaning than themselves knew. The others, who would judge by sense only, or decide by their weak reason, what was fitting for Him, He rebuked, "took the children up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them," thereby bidding us to bring our infants to Him, promising that He will accept them, take them in the arms of His mercy, and return them to us blessed. Yea, and though they, to outward appearance, seem to us the same as before (as doubtless were these children), and though, as St. Mark relates, when He had laid His hands upon them, He departed thence, giving them no word of instruction, and removing His bodily presence; yet who would doubt that that touch lived in them, a shield against Satan's malice, and all the power of the enemy; that that blessing abode around and in them, a source and well-spring of all holy thoughts and good desires? And when the parents knew Who He was, to Whom they had thus half-ignorantly brought their children; that those Hands which touched them were "the Hands" which had "made them and fashioned them," their Creator and their God; that the blessing they had received was their Redeemer's blessing, how must their hearts have leaped for joy! What parent of us would not wish, if he might, that our Saviour should lay His Hand upon his child, and bless it? And if His visible touch was

such a source of comfort and of hope, how not, and much more, when He, the risen, the ascended Saviour, Who, from the right hand of God, sheds forth His gifts abundantly upon His Church, not lays only His hands upon them, but makes them members of Himself, “members of His body, of His flesh, of His bones<sup>f</sup> ;” members of “His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him, Which filleth all *in* all<sup>g</sup> ?” We know still less of the ineffable greatness of that we seek for, than did these poor parents, who sought for His bodily touch and His prayers; and the wishes of those who seek for Baptism for the bodily health of their children, is not so far below their belief, whose belief is most enlightened, as is theirs below the inexpressible reality. For the comfort of us all, our Saviour herein showed that He regarded not our merits, but His mercies; not our ignorance, but His own Omniscience; not our faint wish for a blessing we know not what, but our trust in Him, our wish to have a blessing from Him, the inexhaustible Fountain of all blessedness. He grants, not according to the poverty of our desires, but according to the overflowing riches of His goodness, takes our infants even now invisibly up in His everlasting arms, and returns them to us, blessed.

The text however speaks not of privileges only, but of duties (as every privilege involves some duty, and every duty a privilege); and that, not a single or a passing act, but an abiding duty. And when we claim to ourselves privileges, and would not have them wrested from us, and argue

<sup>f</sup> Eph. v. 30.

<sup>g</sup> Eph. i. 23.

in their defence (as in this of Infant Baptism), we must call to mind the attendant duty, lest the recital of our privileges, unsanctified by duty, become our condemnation. To bring our children to Christ is, namely, no more the *one* act of bringing them to be baptized (although without this we cannot be said to bring them to Christ at all), than mere Christian instruction without Baptism. We not only *bring them* to Him, casting them at His feet, and begging Him to take up these our foundlings, but we *receive* them back again from Him, as the mother of Moses, when saved from the water, and out of and through the water, received him back, although, in a figure and in truth, protected by One mightier than she who gave them birth. They are given back to our care to tend them, not now our own children only, but God's, and so to be tended not only with our natural parental affection, but as a holy deposit, a trust from the Most High, which He will demand of our hands, pure as He entrusted them to us; a holy and mysterious treasure, of value inexpressible, because He has set His signet upon it. Like Hannah, we have "lent them to the Lord," that "as long as they live they should be lent unto the Lord," and though He give them back to us for a while, it is but like Samuel, until they shall be weaned, and fit to minister in His house, His Church, for ever.

So then the ancient work, before quoted, rightly laid down the meaning of this text, where it says, "Baptize your infants, and *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of God*, for He saith,—"Suffer little children to come unto Me." Both parts,



Baptism and Christian education, are included in the words, "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

Yet our Lord hath not left it even thus, but has given us yet further encouragement, by not only bidding us bring our little ones to Him, but adding a reason also: "for *of such* is the kingdom of Heaven." Again, we may observe the largeness of our Lord's words, which are not to be bound down like the words of men, in that He neither says, "of these is the kingdom," so as to exclude others who in manners, though not in age, were like them; nor again, does He so restrain His blessing (as people in these latter days are wont) to childlike dispositions, as to exclude the age of childhood in itself. Looking simply to acquired habits, and the conscious exercise of faith as well-pleasing to God, people have regarded these qualities of children as nothing pleasing in themselves, but only as images (as it were) of that which should hereafter be well-pleasing, if found again in-worked by the Spirit of God in the full-grown man. Docility, guilelessness, unsuspiciousness, forgetfulness and non-requital of injuries, purity, simplicity, implicit faith, believingness, confidence, contentedness, unreasoning acquiescence, undisputatiousness, submissiveness—these and the like qualities of childhood are (they think) but the natural character of the childish age. They cannot but feel and admit that such qualities are lovely, winning; that they draw our souls to these little ones. Yet because these precious blossoms of their opening years will not last, but will drop off, one

by one, without ripening to fruit, unless they be diligently tended, such think that these early gifts are not real, but mere show only. They will have it that when they are developed by the struggle with evil, tried by life's storms and still enduring, then only have these gifts any thing acceptable. When one is fully sanctified, then, and then only, they hold, are his separate actions well-pleasing. When one in the form of manhood retains the mind of a child, "*of such*" (they would explain our Lord's words) "is the kingdom of Heaven." I mean not certainly to compare the *faith* of the aged saint with the *trustingness* of a child; those virtues which are developed, and have not been marred in the development, by the mingling of human frailty, undoubtedly acquire a higher character through that fiery trial, "being thereby found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ<sup>h</sup>." And yet most Christians, recollecting the scars of past sin which they bear about them, and their present imperfections, might well look with longing on one of these little ones, not only as a pattern of humility, but as mourning that they have not "*their* innocency." But besides this, who bade us estimate what is acceptable to God by measures of *attainment*? Who taught us to set this wide difference between tried virtue, and the untried though implanted qualities of the infant, as that the one should be acceptable, the disposition of the infant should, because not yet exercised, be a thing indifferent to its Maker? Even we, being evil, cannot contemplate them without a holy joy,

<sup>h</sup> 1 S. Pet. i. 7.

a love and yearning over their innocence. Yea, the knowledge that a spot of corruption lurks within, which, if unchecked, would mar all that beauty, hinders not our longing reverence for their yet actual untaintedness. We would be, if we might, as they. They are yet images of their Maker, as far as that image has not been defaced through their birth, derived from us; yea, as many of them as have been baptized, have that Image more than restored to them. Of those also whom God admits to be made members of His Son, He removes full half from this world ere this image can have been much impaired by actual sinfulness, yet also, (at least as far as we can see,) ere it receive to any great degree the deepening tracing of those actual workings of holiness, to which we attach such exclusive value. It has been, I think, a misplaced dread, lest we should in any way countenance the Pelagian heresy, which has made men shrink from trusting themselves to contemplate the loveliness of infancy, and speak of its innocence. Why should we think that although they have that within them, which "deserves God's wrath and damnation," yet since He has "predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son," He does not already look with pleasure on this work of His hands to whom He has in His will reserved such intensity of honour? It is unbelief in the healing, new-creative power of Baptism, which hinders any from looking on their baptized infants with amazement of delight and wonder. They are made members of Christ, members of the Son of God; why should we think that God must need wait for our frail ex-

ercise of active faith, ere He can behold with pleasure those whom He has recreated, and clad with righteousness, yea clothed with and made part of His Son? But besides, if we regard the words of His Scriptures, as they bear upon each other, our Lord says not simply "of such is the kingdom of Heaven," but assigns it as a reason, why these infants should not be hindered to come to Him. He speaks not as though the character were simply shadowed forth in these infants, but as really being in them, so that its being in them was a ground why they should be brought to Him. "Of such as these, He says, is the kingdom of Heaven; and therefore, since they are of that character of which the kingdom of Heaven is, let them be brought to Me; they are the fittest to be made subjects of the kingdom." So our Lord at once announces the mystery of the new birth, as He had before declared, "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven<sup>i</sup>;" and the privilege of Infant Baptism, that they who are untainted by actual sin, are the fittest, in His counsel, to be made members of that kingdom, and of Himself. Thus He reproves our exclusive appreciation of this tried holiness, as if "the Lord's arm were shortened," and He were limited, in the treasures of His bounty, to what we see on the surface of this world; as if our Father had one blessing only, and He loved not those, whom He had once chosen to be incorporated into His Son; or as if, at the end, that for which He loved all whom He does love, were

<sup>i</sup> S. Matt. xviii. 3.



not that they *are* members of His Son. Whether they who are so made members, be lesser or greater, young or old, tried or untried, may seem to us who judge by what we see, a great thing; to Him Who sees things as they are, it must be infinitely small, compared to that first, central original gift and source and spring of all gifts, of being *in* His Son. "Our Lord," says St. Irenæus<sup>k</sup>, "breaking not in His own person His law for the human race, sanctified every age by the likeness which it bears to Himself. For He came to save all through Himself, all who by Him are born again to God; infants and little ones, and children, and young persons, and elders. So He came in every age, and for infants being made an infant, sanctifying infants; among little ones a little one, sanctifying those of this same age, and becoming to them an example of filial duty, and righteousness, and subjection.—" As then, by the stages of His own manifestation in the flesh, He sanctified every period of life, and made each capable of holiness, through its conformity to Him, because He had borne it; so, henceforth, we may say,—since those who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ,—as there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female (so that one should be in Christ, the other not,) so is there neither young nor old, "For," says the Apostle, "ye are all one in Christ Jesus." We are not, then, to look upon these little ones as less holy than ourselves, less children of God than ourselves, less God's care, less members of His Son, less of moment in His

<sup>k</sup> Lib. ii. c. 39.

eyes, and so of less intrinsic value, since they have in themselves that which is the source of holiness, adoption, and love of God, the indwelling of the Spirit, for that they have by Baptism "put on Christ." They are temples of the Holy Ghost, and have not defiled that temple. They are members of the Son of God; what more can any one be? yea, if any one would be more, he is nothing, since he would be something of himself, not in Christ.

Such, then, are baptized infants; such in God's purpose, and sight, and love, the fittest to be made members of His kingdom; the patterns, in such portion of their nature as is yet untainted by actual sin, of those who are elder, and for this, their untaintedness, well-pleasing to God, through His Son, in Whom they have obtained remission of that guilt, which from us they contracted. To us, they are a sacred deposit, a pearl of inestimable purity, which we can ill appreciate, corner-stones of the temple of our Lord, which we are to polish for the Master's use, heirs of eternal glory purchased for them by their Redeemer's Blood, who during the first period of their expectancy, are to be under us as "tutors and governors," to prepare them to serve their Saviour here, and reign with Him in glory everlasting.

It is an awful, holy, and perilous charge, to have such a deposit intrusted to our keeping; plants which were created to flourish in the courts of the Lord, but which through our negligence may be blighted; vessels of honour, into which the Holy Spirit hath been already poured, which through our misconduct may be broken; souls whom Christ hath saved, but who through our sin may perish everlastingly. But

because they seem to the eye of sense of little account and we think much of ourselves; since they seem little capable of harm, and so through mere carelessness they are harmed very fearfully, our Lord gives us two warnings in this same context; one, to set before us the mysterious greatness of children; the other, the great peril of causing them to err. “<sup>1</sup>Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for *I* say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father, Which is in heaven.” The care of these little ones, one by one, is given to Angels who behold not the out-skirts of God’s glory only, nor are at times only illumined by it, but *at all times* behold the *very Face* of God while ministering to them. Each of these unconscious little ones has such a Guardian assigned to it, and, from the great dignity of these their appointed Guardians, we are to learn their great value in our Father’s eyes. Whence our Lord adds, as if their salvation was the very especial object of His coming, “<sup>m</sup>*For* the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” As one would leave ninety-nine sheep, and wander up and down in the mountains to seek the one gone astray, so (as the Fathers explain it) He left the heavenly hosts to seek that one sheep which was lost, man. And this likeness our Lord applies to children, “<sup>n</sup>Even so it is not the will of your Father Which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” Every one of these little ones is accounted as if it were the whole human race. And since He so prizes them, we may the more give heed

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xviii. 10.<sup>m</sup> Ib. 11.<sup>n</sup> Ib. 14.

to the terrible warning, which answers to the woe denounced on Judas, “<sup>o</sup> Whoso shall cause one of these little ones who believe in Me to offend, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the midst of the sea;” i. e. better that he should die the death men most loathe—sudden, violent, disgraceful, accursed, a spectacle and a bye-word to men—the death of a malefactor, than do that, whereby he shall perish everlastingly.

The care, then, taken of these little ones, may be regarded as among the tests of the sound state of any branch of the Church, to which they have been so lovingly commended by her Lord; they, in outward show, poor, helpless, weak, ignorant, having every thing to learn; to the eye of faith, cleansed in their Redeemer’s Blood, waited upon and guarded each by its own Angel, clad in the white robe of their baptismal purity, rich in invisible treasures, insensible to our poor outward world, and wrapped in a world unseen, and set forth as our example that we should become such as they. Of a truth, whether we contemplate them in *their* purity, or our Saviour’s “woe on such as cause them to offend,” one would alike shrink from the duty of forming what is of so great price and yet so frail, but that a duty is laid upon us, yea, “woe is on us, if we do it not;” and it is not we alone who do it, but He Who saith, “<sup>p</sup> Whoso receiveth one such little child in My Name, receiveth Me;” He Whose face their Angels in heaven do always behold.

<sup>o</sup> Ib. 6.

<sup>p</sup> S. Mark ix. 37.



The care of children, then, one may well know to be the sign of a standing or a falling Church, as we see it daily to be, of a standing or a falling family; and our Church in her happier days amply provided for it. Believing her baptized infants to be born again, she took care to keep to the utmost of her power that good thing which was placed within them. She gave them to her ministers as the prime of their charge; nay, she made it one main office of one order of her ministers, to "catechise children," and through the Bishop, she requires all her Deacons<sup>a</sup> to promise so to do; she commanded all her lay members who had any children in their charge, "Fathers<sup>r</sup>, Mothers, Masters, and Dames, to cause all Children, Servants, and Apprentices to come to Church" to be so catechised, "until they have learnt all here appointed for them to learn." She bade her ministers never be weary in instructing them, and she thought it not possible that the members of the Church could think it a weariness to witness their being received into her bosom, or to listen to the instruction which she appointed on each Lord's-Day to be imparted to them in the presence of the congregation. In her litanies, or solemn supplications to Almighty God, she thought especially of them, and inserted a petition not for "fatherless children" only, whom we all should pity, but for all "young children," as much needing her pity and her prayers. Evil times came. Baptismal regeneration was held in the letter only, and then in the letter also rejected. And then some came to

<sup>a</sup> Office for the Ordination of Deacons.

<sup>r</sup> Rubric at the end of the Catechism.

regard children as what they by nature were, not weak only, but absolutely sinful, and incapable almost of spiritual strength. Holiness was regarded not as the privilege of these children of God, but as a rare gift, which was only here and there vouchsafed: gladly to be accepted when it came, but rarely to be looked for: they were looked upon as the prey of Satan, until here and there one might be in after years called out: and so love and care waxed cold, and it seemed a hopeless struggle to keep them within Christ's fold, in which men doubted whether they had more than outwardly entered. Catechising was neglected or performed as an almost lifeless task; and people almost said, "Let them alone, they must sin, they are but children." They let them alone, unless their offences interfered with themselves; and we in these days are reaping the bitter fruits. Through our neglect of the children, the wolf hath come and scattered the sheep, and we have to bring them back, if we may, one by one, "out of a naughty world." The seed-time was missed, and the tares allowed to spring up, and we wonder at the barren and choked harvest. The character of our people has been lowered. Crime,—if not atrocious crime, though this too whensoever temptation offers, yet—sin in all its varied forms, sin against our God, has increased. People have begun to feel that they are treading upon unsafe ground, the cinders are crumbling from beneath them, and they feel the heat of the fire of the concealed pit, which every nation or Church diggeth for itself, which educates not her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They from without, who

would remedy the evil, seem to have clean forgotten that the education of children was once our office, and would educate human beings as machines in a civil society, not as members of their Redeemer, and inheritors of heaven. And we, my clerical brethren<sup>s</sup>, in very many cases, are employing our strength in desultory efforts to snatch one here or there out of the flames, instead of making our chief diligence to train our youth in the right way, from which, God telleth us, they will, when old, not depart. We are ever behind-hand, ever labouring to recover lost ground, and yet, so long as we make not children our main object, we are abandoning fresh and hopeful soil to Satan's tares.

It is as one check to this frightful course, that the Society for educating the children of the poor is a cheering sign. It is not, of course, without its dangers. No Society within the Church can be so safe as the Church, because the one is human, the other is Divine. Yet the remedies to those dangers are entrusted to ourselves: the one depends upon our own liberality, the other on the faithfulness of our Ministers. For schools will not only not be useful, but will be mischievous, if, from our penuriousness, wishing to have the show of doing much with little cost, we congregate large masses of children together, without adequate superintendence, or take not good heed to whom (in the inferior but important office of schoolmaster) we entrust them, or (to speak plainly) forget in any way that "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Again, (and on this I may especially insist, where so many candidates for Holy

<sup>s</sup> Preached where many clergy were present.

Orders are present,) schools and education will become a curse instead of a blessing, if the clergy think that their labour is in any way superseded by the existence of schools. Rather, it is augmented, enlarged. A new field is opened to them, and they must follow their Lord's call, and cultivate His vineyard the more diligently. The power to read giveth not the love of reading God's word; to learn to read is not education; a various knowledge of things of all sorts is not education; "knowledge puffeth up," and the power of reading, like every other power, is more likely to be abused than to be used aright; the abuse comes more naturally to man's natural heart than the use. Knowledge of all sorts is but a sharp instrument, which whoso learneth not to use aright, will wound himself. Instruction by itself is not education, but the whetting only of an appetite, which, as it is taught to feed on what is healthy or unhealthy, will benefit its possessor or destroy him. "The fear of the Lord" is the only education, "the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding." One may then safely say, that so far from these institutions being any reason why the Parish-Priest should think his labour done, they are chiefly valuable for bringing the lambs of his flock together, where he can most frequently and advantageously tend them. Far better were it that every school in the land were destroyed, than that the Clergy should give over any portion of their office; far better, of course, that the children of the poor should have no knowledge but what they re-

<sup>t</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 1.<sup>u</sup> Prov. ix. 10.



ceive from “<sup>v</sup> the lips of the priest, who should retain knowledge,” than be abandoned to feed, where they may, in large but barren pastures; far better, that as our Church directs, our children should be diligently catechised, even if they should never learn to read, than that they should be taught to read, and catechising neglected. “In those parishes in the country,” says Bp. Beveridge <sup>w</sup>, “where few or none can read or say the Catechism themselves, much less teach others to read or say it, is the Minister bound to teach them to read? That is no part of the Ministerial Office. Neither is there any necessity of it. In the first ages of the Church, there were few who could read, yet many were so well instructed in the Faith of Christ, that they cheerfully suffered martyrdom for it. For being taught only necessary things, such as those few contained in our Church Catechism, they soon learned them so as to be deeply affected with them, and retain them in their hearts as well as in their heads. To make children understand the Catechism, who cannot read nor were taught it before, will require more time and patience, but it may be done.” “The most useful of all preaching,” says Bp. Hall <sup>x</sup> towards the end of his life, “is catechetical; this being the grounds, the other raiseth the walls and roof; this informs the judgement, that stirs up the affections. What good is there of those affections, which run before the judgement? or of those walls which want the foundation? For my part, I have spent the greater half of my life in this station of

<sup>v</sup> Mal. ii. 7.      <sup>w</sup> Church Catechism, Postscript, p. 161, ed. 2.

<sup>x</sup> Dedication to the “Old religion.”

our holy service, I thank God not unpainfully nor unprofitably. But there is no one thing of which I repent so much, as not to have bestowed more hours in this public exercise of catechising, in regard whereof I could quarrel with my very sermons, and wish that a great part of them had been exchanged for this preaching conference. Those other divine discourses enrich the brains and tongue, *this settles the heart.*" And they who have observed narrowly the evils of the present day, the unsettledness, unstayedness, ignorance, indifference, supercilious criticism, vagueness of belief, self-willedness, have seen also that they arose from this neglect of our Church's ordinance to catechise.

Yet need we not fall into either snare. We need neither neglect schools, nor, having them, need we neglect the children collected in them. This need be said in caution only, although as caution, doubtless, there is need of it; lest we, too, should be swept away by the evil torrent of the times, which would teach people much about the things of this world, and little or nothing of the world to come; much about these fleeting things, and little about things eternal; much of what they call "life," and little about the true life, life everlasting, or Him Who is our Life; much about the world which perisheth, and little about the Maker thereof, God, Who liveth and abideth, and is blessed and blesseth for ever. And what we teach, we must teach according to the truth which God has given us, not what every one thinketh to be truth, or is right in his own eyes. We must teach with the authority wherewith we are invested; not that poor bar-

ren remnant of truth, which remains over, when the holy truths are set aside which men dispute; but the full, certain truth which He gave us Who is the Truth, as well as the Way and the Life, and formed the Church “*as the pillar and ground of the truth.*” Yet the power to read *is* a blessing, if they who are taught it are taught to use it aright, and above all books to love the Book of God, and above all knowledge, the knowledge of God. In sickness the power of reading the Bible is a cheering power; in health, it may prevent our abusing and forgetting God; in loneliness, it makes God our companion, and families it binds together; when tottering, it may save us from falling; the fallen, by God’s imparted power, it may raise up; those who stand it may keep upright. By it, God’s Holy Spirit converteth (if need be), maketh wise, joyeth, enlighteneth the soul; the broken-hearted it bindeth up; the wounds of sin it gradually healeth; it leadeth men on from strength to strength, and to the dying Christian it opens the everlasting gates, and shows him the golden streets of the heavenly city, and the angels who shall conduct him to Abraham’s bosom. One dare not say more, lest a creature should be praising the word of God. It supersedes not the labour of the minister, but it supports the doctrine and exhortation, which out of that word he imparts; prepares them to understand it, and fixes it deeper. The will to use this power we cannot give; yet whatever we can, the means of obtaining such a privilege, and with it, as we trust, the will itself, you are this day called on for.

One might (out of much recent experience) appeal to two instances only, in this very diocese, one where the Minister has catechised (as the Church directs) on each Lord's Day for twenty-two years, and those who have come out of his school have been gladly received into families, because his school was a sort of pledge that they would be faithful, "not doing eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." The other I may name, Ewelme, because he <sup>a</sup>of whom I speak is gone to his rest, and they who witnessed the reverent silent mourning of the children, as his body passed by to its temporary home, will be assured what his fatherly training of these children of his schools was, what a blessing these schools may be; and they who witnessed his schools, or the young communicants of his flock, will easily understand why his loss was so mourned by these little ones.

Much has been done by this Society, considering its limited means: and of the schools built by its aid, the knowledge has come that they have already proved a blessing in the visible improvement of the children there trained. As an irreligious or indifferent education has, as far as it has spread, been a curse to the country, and the most crimes have been committed for some time, not by the ignorant, but by the ill-educated, so have our religious schools been already a visible blessing.

Yet while God has not refused His blessing to such efforts as have been made, what has been done hitherto is but a mere fraction of what we should

<sup>a</sup> Eph. vi. 6.

<sup>a</sup> Rev. Dr. Burton.



have done; we have fenced in the few, and left abroad the many; and while we have been thus rendering this listless duty<sup>b</sup>, children are year by year growing up, year by year are passing beyond your care. Too many years have passed away since this society was established, and each bore along with it its own number of neglected children, beyond our power of recovery, too often, we must fear, (horrible as it is to think of,) to their own everlasting destruction, and our great loss and condemnation.

These things should not be. More energetic efforts should be made; not on this day only, but by continued, enlarged contributions, year by year, for each year's need. If education be a good, this petty, creeping way of advancing it is not the way to bring down the favour of God. If ignorance and idleness be the parents of sin, it is not by these puny efforts that we can recover ground from Satan's kingdom. If what has been done regularly, has been mainly done by the contributions of some fifty or sixty persons, how much more, were all who are able in this one city to contribute!

Fear not, as is sometimes said, lest you should leave nothing to do for them who come after. Were it so, it were a glorious monopoly of service, and praise, and blessedness, to be allowed so to provide for the children of our Redeemer, as to leave nothing but to maintain what we had done. It was thus our forefathers in old time did for us, and we who praise God in these goodly houses, which we builded not, and should not have

<sup>b</sup> Preached before the late effort of the Church, to extend education on a larger and higher scale.

built, might well be careful of thinking much of what we do. But no one who knows any thing of the depth of spiritual destitution in this our land, would ever fear that if our charity were twice a hundred fold what it is, we should engross too much to ourselves. Mean-time there is that to be done, which our posterity can in no case do, to take care of those young plants of the Lord, which are committed to our keeping, which year by year grow wild, after they had been grafted into the True Vine, because we kept them not, and which will be demanded of our hands by the Lord of the vineyard.

Yet it is said, again, "there are now so many calls upon our charity." In God's mercy there are. He has put it into the minds of His servants to repair in some degree their past negligence; and so, compared with a little time past, the calls seem to be many. Yet there may be a nearer and a more humbling reason. No one can doubt that that disease, which is the last outlet of life to a decaying state, luxury, has been spreading into our very inmost frame. We talk familiarly of states of old time, of Tyre, and Sidon, and Rome, and Sybaris, and Corinth, and Venice, how when they became luxurious their end was approaching. We speak of it, as *to them*, as a proverb. We doubt not of it any more than that the setting of the sun will bring on night, or that rank weeds will impoverish a soil. And yet we confess of ourselves that we are a luxurious people, that luxury is increasing, spreading every where, that it is taking possession of our land, that we know not how to

stem it, and yet we are secure, as if what has taken place every where else would not here, as if we were to be an exception to God's dealing.

It may be that God has seen some good thing in us, and while He has been chastising us in different ways during many past years, so in His goodness He would open to us these blessed channels, whereby we might get rid of the luxury which would destroy us, and be doubly blessed, both in that we gave to Him, and in that we denied ourselves. It may be, that He saw that some mighty effort was necessary to break up our inured habits, the laws of luxury and comfort, which we had established for ourselves; the iron yoke of custom, which we wear even while it galls us, because we have not strength to break it through; the hold which Satan gains over us by any admitted evil; and so He has set before our eyes, in a way in which He did not set before those of our fathers, the wants of His children, that we may shake off this drowsiness wherein we lie, and open our eyes and see the pit we have digged for our own feet. It may be for this cause, that He has permitted one branch of the state to forget its duty<sup>c</sup>, and instead of ministering, as it ought, to the needs of the Church, almost to lay sacrilegious hands on that which is not its, but God's; that so being

<sup>c</sup> Preached while the State refused to assist in Church-education. It has been retained, since we are always too ready to forget the blessedness of adversity. The withdrawal of man's help is now felt to have been a great blessing to our Church. It taught her anew (if she but forget it not) her true strength, dependence upon her Lord.

pressed on every side, “<sup>d</sup>in peril by our own countrymen,” we might at last turn to Him, “<sup>e</sup>break off our sins by repentance, and our iniquities by shewing mercy on the poor,” and giving Him of His own, before we be called to give account of our stewardship, because we may be no longer “unjust stewards<sup>f</sup>.”

You, who are assembled here this day, have all been educated more or less; you have known the value of that education. The station which you fill, the prosperity wherewith God has prospered you, have been mainly owing to His blessing upon it. Above all, you will have felt that thereby you have in many cases been saved from falling, or have been recovered; that it is by God’s guardianship over you, through those to whom He gave your education, that you are what you are this day, that as many as are so doing, are walking before God in the light of the living; that what we are or have is not of ourselves, but the gift of God through that education. We shall also recollect, most of us, that in some former thoughtless days, we offended with and caused to offend by idle words, or worse actions, little ones like ourselves; that we abused the gifts which God gave us, and joined others in what was sin. This cannot be recalled; the evil which we sowed together, may have had its full, terrible growth in them, though, by God’s mercy checked in us. But the evil which God allows us not to repair, He permits us, in some degree, by greater diligence, to replace. These are also His children;

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 26.

<sup>e</sup> Dan. iv. 27.

<sup>f</sup> Local references, here and elsewhere, are mostly omitted.



these come here this day as representatives of, and as petitioners for a larger number, who, in this your country, close at hand, are neglected, and might like these be trained in the ways of God, from which we have God's promise they shall not depart. Other labour often brings a slow return; the pains bestowed on children (as all know who have laboured with any faithfulness) yields fruit quickly, abundantly. For they are not yet hardened, they have lately come from their Maker's hands, their hearts are open and simple to believe; they hear, with believing joy, of the brightness of Heaven, and angels' purity, a Father's presence, and a Redeemer's love, and the indwelling of The Sanctifier; they are ready to bow their tender necks to the cross, and to take it on them, as their Saviour did; for their baptismal purity is yet recent, their Saviour has lately taken them into His arms, and blessed them; their angels do behold their Father's presence. To educate children requires but faith to regard them as what they are, children of God and members of Christ; to treat them in all things as young soldiers of Christ. The rest is sight, not faith. In such, then, as these, your Father would receive your acknowledgement of your debt in His own guardianship of yourselves; in such as these, your sorrow, if at any time you have offended any of these little ones. Be this done with faithfulness, and then shall our Church, instead of looking with sorrow at her straying members, be again "a joyful mother of children." Be this done with self-denial, and ye who have sacrificed of your comforts and your ease, that these lit-

the ones may be trained in the ways of holiness, shall doubtless see them again as your "crown and your joy," at the awful Day; ye shall say in your measure, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me!"

And you, my children, who have the blessing of being thus taught the way of God, and the value of your own souls, and how you may please your Heavenly Father, and serve Him for the short time of your life here on earth, and what He has done for you, and how your Saviour loved you, and laid down His life for you, and what care He is now taking of each of you, even placing His holy angels to protect you, and Himself blessing you, and how you may come to that happy home where all is joy—you have the more duty, because you know this. God has favoured you above many other children, in teaching you these things; and you must love Him more than others, for you will have to give an account to Him, what use you have made of what He has done for you; and they who deny themselves that you may be thus educated, will, if they hear of your good behaviour, be more encouraged to do the same for others also, and grieved if they hear otherwise. You should pray also for those who have done you this kindness; and hereafter, as we trust, if you go on patiently in well-doing, you and they will rejoice together in Heaven; they, that they gave up earthly things for your good, and you at seeing them who wished thus well for you, and both in the everlasting mercy of God, Who hath made, redeemed and sanctified us, and would bring us to His glory.

To Him, the God Which fed us all our lives long, unto this day, and redeemed us from all evil, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be blessing and glory and wisdom and honour and might for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## SERMON XIV.

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HOLY COMMUNION.—DANGER IN CARELESS  
RECEIVING, DEATH IN NEGLECTING.

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1 Cor. x. 3—5.

*“ They did all eat the same spiritual meat ; and did all drink the same spiritual drink : . . . but with many of them God was not well pleased : for they were overthrown in the wilderness.”*

OUR LORD, while on earth, spake in a very different way to the different classes of those who were impressed by His miracles. Some, although the fewer, He invited ; others, the greater number, He deterred. Some, who were unwilling to venture to follow Him, He called ; others, who thronged about Him, He alarmed, or laid open to them the secret motives of their coming. When Peter said, “ Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord <sup>a</sup>,” Jesus said unto him, “ Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” St. Peter’s fear was the humility which our Lord exalteth, and He encouraged him. Zacchæus, a publican and a sinner, who

<sup>a</sup> S. Luke v. 8—10.



had wronged others, yet now wished to see Jesus, if but far off, He of Himself came, Salvation, unto his house. When one whom He had bid to follow Him said, “<sup>b</sup> Let me first go and bury my father,” He severed him with a strong arm from temptations of his home: “Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” When a Scribe (knowing not himself) said, “<sup>c</sup> Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest,” He warns him of the hardness of the service: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” When “<sup>d</sup> many believed on Him, *then* said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Their pride was offended at these last words, and so the evil of their own hearts was laid open to them, and they who had “believed in Him” were perhaps among those who “took up stones to cast at Him<sup>e</sup>.” When “great multitudes went with Him,” then “turned He and said, If any man come unto Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple; and whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple<sup>f</sup>.” When, after the feeding with the loaves, the people took ship and came seeking for Him, and found Him, and asked Him further of the miracle they knew not of, “<sup>g</sup> Rabbi, when camest

<sup>b</sup> S. Luke ix. 59, 60.    <sup>c</sup> Ib. ix. 58.    <sup>d</sup> S. John viii. 30, 32.

<sup>e</sup> Ib. 59.    <sup>f</sup> S. Luke xiv. 26, 27.    <sup>g</sup> S. John vi. 25, 27.

Thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth ;” and the rest of His discourse on the Holy Eucharist, wherein He would give them His Flesh to eat, so offended them, that “<sup>h</sup>many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him,” so that it almost seemed as though He would be left alone with the twelve. “The twelve” themselves He chose out of a great number. “He called unto Him His disciples<sup>i</sup>, and of them He chose twelve.” “He called unto Him whom He would, and they came unto Him<sup>k</sup> ;” and among them He chose the traitor, in part that so “the Scriptures might be fulfilled,” in part also as a warning to us, that no nearness to Him is any safety, unless we be, in that proportion, faithful; nay, that it brings with it the greater danger, and leads to the greater condemnation. Of Judas only, who was so very near our Lord, is it told us, that He is “<sup>l</sup>gone unto his own place.” The end of most other wicked men has been and is veiled from us, or is conveyed less distinctly. Judas, who cast out devils in His Name, who preached Him, in His Name did many wonderful works, who did eat and drink with Him, was present at the last Supper, his sentence God has revealed before the Day of Judgement, as a warning to us how we approach unto Him.

The same teaching is conveyed by the whole his-

<sup>h</sup> S. John vi. 66.

<sup>i</sup> S. Luke vi. 13.

<sup>k</sup> S. Mark iii. 13.

<sup>l</sup> Acts i. 25.

tory of the Old Testament; and because there will ever be the same two classes in the Church,—those who shrink back from holy ordinances and the presence of their Lord, and those who intrude upon them irreverently without having cleansed and prepared their hearts,—our Church follows the example of her Lord, and would, if she might, restrain some, but for a while, that they might reap the greater fruit, and escape the peril; others she bids lay aside their listlessness or timidity, much more their worldly excuses, be in earnest, and approach.

This morning<sup>m</sup>, just before the season came to exhort you again to come to the Holy Communion and to forewarn you to “come holy and clean to so heavenly a feast,” by one of those coincidences whereby God so often instructs us, the Epistle was read, setting forth the privileges of the Jews and the dangers ensuing on their abuse.

The history of the Exodus, or deliverance from Egypt, which St. Paul here applies, is one of the most striking types in the Old Testament; striking at once from its great likeness to our own history and trials, and from the awefulness of its warning. All, St. Paul says, had been brought safe through the Red Sea; their enemies had been *all* destroyed, themselves saved. All had been rescued from a hard bondage in mire and clay under a hard taskmaster, and had been brought out by God’s mighty hand and outstretched arm. This, St. Paul says, was the image of our Baptism. So then we were *all* therein “delivered from *our* enemies and from the hands of *him* who hated us, that we might

<sup>m</sup> Preached on the 9th Sunday after Trinity.

serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." *All of us* were, by the sacrament of Baptism, figured by the Red Sea, brought out of the bondage of Satan into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The chains of original sin were broken; its guilt remitted; our enemies destroyed; ourselves, having passed through the waters of Baptism were "called and brought into a state of salvation." But then a new series of trials began. Israel was still in the wilderness; the land of Canaan, the image of *our* heavenly rest, was at a distance; he had different trials to overcome in his way; new difficulties to prove him, and the recollection of the enjoyments of sense, which he had in the midst of Egypt's hard bondage, to draw him back. But he had also the pillar and the cloud to guide him, the sense of God's Presence, and the manna, food given him directly by God, to sustain him. And with these he was to hold on his way. The Red Sea conducted him over to the manna, the manna was to support him to the promised land, or (according to St. Paul's explanation that the manna was spiritual food) the type of holy Baptism conducted him to the type of the Holy Eucharist. All then have been saved by Baptism; all have a spiritual food offered them, which may conduct them on their pilgrimage toward heaven; and yet most of Israel fell short of the type of *our* heaven.

Of much instruction which this likeness might afford, three points may perhaps be more to our especial purpose:—1. The nature of God's Sacraments; 2. the danger of carelessness in receiving them: and yet, 3. their absolute necessity.



1. As to their *nature*. They are given to our faith, and are at once its trials and its reward. Their operation and their mode of working, how they come to have this efficacy, wherein their majesty consists, is unseen. We see only the elements of this world, wherewith God worketh; Himself, Who through them worketh in us, and the way of His workings, we see not. And to those who are inclined to believe only what they see, this has ever been a trial. Even the right-minded Nicodemus asked beforehand of the one Sacrament, “<sup>n</sup>How can these things be?” The carnal Jews strove among themselves as to the other, “<sup>o</sup>How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” It is especially a trial in these our carnal, grovelling days. Scarcely any of us, probably, conceive of our Lord’s Sacraments as we ought, even of those who would fain think most reverentially of them. Among the many, the Sacrament of Baptism is too sadly looked upon as an *outward* rite, almost indifferent. They ask, with Nicodemus, “How can these things be?” yet not as he was, perplexed and amazed, but in contempt; they go on to deny that efficacy, the mode whereof they cannot understand. In the holy Eucharist they cannot proceed with such open daring, but they come to the same end. Our Church, with the Holy Scriptures, saith that God therein “hath given His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to be our spiritual food and sustenance,” that they who “receive it with a true penitent heart and lively faith,” “spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ therein, and drink His Blood, dwell in Christ and Christ in them;” that “the Body and Blood of Christ

<sup>n</sup> S. John iii.<sup>o</sup> Ib. vi.

are *therein verily* and *indeed* taken and received by the faithful." Man would fain know, *how* what is to our sight bread and wine should be also the Body and Blood of his Lord.

Now for this habit of mind God provided a remedy beforehand in the miracle of the manna. The manna had in itself no power to support life; the carnal of Israel loathed it on that very account. "The children of Israel wept again and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish that we did eat in Egypt freely;—but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes<sup>p</sup>." "Our soul loatheth this light bread<sup>q</sup>." And it was for this very purpose that God gave it them. "He fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live<sup>r</sup>." God would teach them and us thereby not to depend for our support, bodily or spiritual, on what we see, but on Him. It is He Who gives strength to the food, to which we should too much trust, for our bodies; and He, the Same, gives strength to that of our souls, which we should mistrust. The manna had no power of life; and so that it did support life, was owing to a virtue infused into it by God; it was indued with powers which the natural substance had not. It was a substance taken out of its natural use, indued with heavenly virtue, furnished with an unseen efficacy; coming from heaven; Di-

<sup>p</sup> Numbers xi. 4—6.

<sup>q</sup> Ib. xxi. 5.

<sup>r</sup> Deut. viii. 3.

vine Power in an earthly form; Angels' food; supporting men, like the blessed Angels, by the direct agency of God in a visible form. If any can say *how* the manna supported life, they may ask *how* is the Bread and Wine our Lord's Body and Blood.

The frame of mind which God by this instruction would form in us is, to believe His word to the letter, and not to ask *how* it is, or doubt, but to believe it, because He hath said it. Our Church, indeed, with the ancients, holds that every thing herein is spiritual. As our Lord saith, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Every thing here is spiritual; spiritual food, spiritual feeding, spiritual nourishment, spiritual life, even the Life in God and Christ Who "is a Spirit," and "Who shall change our vile bodies that they shall be like unto His glorious Body," and make them also spiritual. But although spiritual, ye must take heed lest ye make it *falsely* spiritual. As there is a true Spirit, even "the Spirit of truth," even so there are false spirits, and that which comes from them is falsely spiritual. Every thing, as I said, is *spiritual*, but it is not, therefore, (as is a common error to think) the less, yea, it is the more, *real*; Christ giveth us His Body and Blood *spiritually*; He dwelleth in us *spiritually*; it is with our spirit that He is united; and it is by that union that we have a spirit; thereby, that we shall be raised up at the last day. Our Church, well knowing all to be spiritual, yet takes our Lord's promises to the very letter. He says, "† the

• Phil. iii. 21.

† S. John vi. 51, 56.

bread that I give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." He says, "This is My Body." He saith again, "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him;" He saith even, We "eat" Him<sup>u</sup>; He saith elsewhere, of those who love Him and keep His words, "My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." What He saith must be true. "v Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Hath He purposed, and shall He not make it good?" Let us not measure His infinity by our finiteness, His might by our weakness, what is possible to Him by what is impossible to us, the boundlessness of His mercy by the narrowness of our thoughts or the poverty of our desires. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," and, therefore, that which He giveth us is His Body, although our senses can report to us nothing of the inward reality, or only what falls within their reach, the forms of earth; and in those who receive Him, He dwelleth, and the Father dwelleth, and the Holy Spirit dwelleth, although we know not *how* God can dwell in man. Every thing of God must be a mystery to us. The dealings of His Providence, the things which we see around us, ourselves, our own thoughts, sin, evil, misery, sufferings of infants, all are mysteries to us. Our only wisdom is to believe all, to receive all He saith, not disputing about it, nor bandying about "words without knowledge," nor losing ourselves and God's truth in "strifes of words without profit," but receiving it, thankfully embracing it, seeking to be sanctified by His truth. So shall

<sup>u</sup> S. John vi. 57.<sup>v</sup> Num. xxiii. 17.



He guide thee into more and more truth, and in the end thou mayest by His teaching understand what, without understanding it, thou didst at first receive. At least, or rather, what is chiefest, thou wilt find thyself blessed in it without understanding it. It is a misery and a sore loss that men would fain bring down the things of God which they do not know into the things of man which they do know, and are pleased to keep “the beggarly elements” of human things, because they think they understand, rather than the Divine which they understand not. Thus men read that “the Spirit of God dwelleth *in us*”, that the Holy Ghost is *in them*\*, dwelleth *in us*†,” and these, they say, mean that good thoughts and desires are put into their hearts, that ‘people are under the influence of the Spirit.’ This is true again. But the fruit is not the sap; motion is not the life, which gives the power to move. Who bade us so explain or explain away the word of God, that when He says “the Holy Ghost dwelleth in man,” we should say, this *only* means that ‘the Holy Ghost enables a man to do good works?’ How does this come up to the other? We see, indeed, that the Holy Ghost doth dwell in *others*, by the good works which He enables them to perform; we may know of ourselves that He dwelleth in us, by our “keeping the commandments” of God. So by a man’s acting, moving, speaking, we may tell that there is life *in him*; that his soul is *in him*; yet acting, moving, speaking, are not the soul’s dwelling in him, but only the fruits and proofs of it. Why then should

\* Rom. viii. 9. 1 Cor. iii. 16.    † Ib. vi. 19.    ‡ 2 Tim. i. 14.

we think that no more is meant by the Holy Ghost's dwelling *in* us, than that we are influenced *by* Him? We influence each other, act upon one another, yet no one will say that we dwell in one another. Yet this is said in so many different ways, as if to prevent our throwing away our birthrights. Some I have named. And further, "<sup>z</sup> Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us <sup>a</sup>." "<sup>b</sup> He that keepeth His (Christ's) commandment, dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit Which He hath given us." Where, you observe, His abiding in us is a further blessing, which we have by the Spirit Which He hath given us; it is not simply the working of the Spirit, but something beyond, made known to us by that working. "<sup>c</sup> That the love wherewith Thou hast loved them, may be in them, *and I* in them." So then, though "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him;" and "the love of God dwelleth in" men, yet doth not the love of God dwell in man, apart from God, Who is love. Our Lord saith not only, "the love, wherewith Thou hast loved them," dwelleth in them, but also, "*and I* in them;" so that a further indwelling of Christ is spoken of, than what men would understand by "<sup>d</sup> the love of God shed abroad in their hearts." "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *in you* <sup>e</sup>?" So now Scripture in so many places declareth, that *in* faithful Christians

<sup>z</sup> 1 S. John iv. 15.<sup>a</sup> Ib. 12.<sup>b</sup> Ib. iii. 24.<sup>c</sup> S. John xviii. 26.<sup>d</sup> Rom. v. 5.<sup>e</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 19.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost dwell; they are said to be thus *inhabited* by the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, to be the Temple of the Holy Ghost *in* them; God is *in* them, dwelleth *in* them, abideth *in* them, maketh His abode *in* them; and *that* with the same words as it is said, that the Father dwelleth in the Son; nay, our Lord names this indwelling of His Father in Him, to assure us of the reality of the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the faithful Christian. Well might it be said to us, “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Scriptures have spoken!” Whence this backwardness to believe the height and depth of the riches of God’s goodness in Christ? Why should it be incredible that the Son of God, Who became incarnate and dwelt in human flesh, shall enlarge this gift and dwell really in those who are true members of His Body? Why, that in these holy Mysteries He should impart Himself to the believer, and dwell in him? Why, alas! but that men are afraid of the greatness of the gifts entrusted to them? They would fain grovel on the earth, and these would lift them to heaven; they would fain follow their own wills and their own pleasures, and live an easy, unconstrained life, and so they shrink from hearing of a gift within them, which they must needs stir up. Sinful man cannot endure the presence of God; and they have not made up their minds to part with all their sins, follies, and weaknesses. The holiness of the temple of God affrights them. They had rather live in a common house, in which they might follow in some manner their own ways, than in the Church of God, in which they must keep under

their thoughts, restrain their actions, speak lowly, act reverently and with awe. They would rather—not be left altogether to themselves, but still—avoid the awful majesty of being temples of God, which they must not dishonour nor defile. They would not wholly part with their sins, and so, with the men of Gadara, they would have the Lord “depart from their coasts.” Thus parting with the truth and the True God, and turning unto fables, they would make themselves an idol, which, if it cannot help, can neither hear, nor see, nor avenge. Men would of themselves part with the love and favour of God, if they could part with the fear of Him also; or, (which they would best have) they would part with all the glories of His promises, and all the perils joined with them, hoping to escape hell, yet unconcerned about the unspeakable greatness of heaven.

But, my Brethren, it cannot be. “Whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear,” we are encompassed, within and without, with glorious gifts. We cannot be as the heathen; we cannot strip the Sacraments of their greatness, and make them an easy, costless way of salvation, which shall help us lightly on, and if misused, or little used, should not much injure us; as if this Holy Sacrament should remind us of Christ, and be, as a remembrancer, useful, and instruct us of God’s mercies, and that then, comforted by God’s mercy, we might return to the same round of worldly thoughts, self-indulgence, and unsteady, wavering, halting, walk with God as before.

No, my Brethren, (and this is the second point I would advert to) God would teach us by the Epis-



tle, that His gifts are great, but so are His chastisements on their neglect and abuse. The people of Israel, He tells us, are “our ensamples,” patterns, likenesses, as in their blessings so in their punishments. All which they had were figures and shadows of what we have. Their sacrifices were likenesses of our great Sacrifice; their passage in the Red Sea, miraculous as it was, was but an outline of our Baptism; their miraculous feeding on the manna, and their miraculous supply of water from the flinty rock, was an image only of our miraculous feeding on the Body and Blood of Christ. They had the shadow; we, the living, real, truth. Yet so likewise is their chastisement but a shadow of that of unfaithful Christians. The death of the body is but a shadow and image of the death of the soul; the first death but pictures the second death; the death of time but pictures that for ever and ever; the serpents whereby they perished, are but the earthly type of devils, of the never-dying worm. There is then no safety in simply *receiving* this spiritual food. For so the Apostle expressly says. They “ate that spiritual food,” which was an image of ours, “<sup>f</sup>but with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” For every sin, they perished by thousands. And yet what sins? Some of them indeed grievous in man’s sight, and yet, which are not committed by many who have been “baptized into Christ?” They were idolaters; so, St. Paul says, is every covetous person, so is every one who loves the creature more than the Creator, who for any of the gifts of God

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. x. 5.

forgets God, who allows the cares and business and pleasures of this life, to withdraw his soul from God. "They tempted Christ, and were destroyed of serpents." Wherewith tempted they Him? Alas! by asking of man, what they should have asked of God, by asking Moses to bring them water out of the rock<sup>s</sup>, by being dissatisfied with God's Providence over them and His dealings with them, by wishing they had been left to themselves, their slavery, and their self-indulgence. "Neither lust ye after evil things, as they also lusted." After what lusted they? After food which they had had in Egypt, and which now God gave them not; and "<sup>h</sup>the wrath of God was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote them with a very great plague."

I say not this to lessen the sins of Israel. They were great and grievous sins, and were greatly and grievously punished; and we may in them the rather see our own state. Many of their sins were not what we should have thought such great sins, had not God by their punishment set His seal upon them, and stamped them as such. Yet in them and in their punishment He would have us see the character of our sins and our punishment; and both as images only, as the sun upon the waters gives an image of itself, though far weaker than itself. We can bear to look on the one, not on the other; we can hardly bear to look on temporal death, who could dare to look upon the eternal?

We are set in the midst of many and great dangers. There are many paths to hell; one only, and that a narrow one, to Heaven: we have many and

<sup>s</sup> Exod. xvii.

<sup>h</sup> Numbers xi. 33.

great gifts; and these gifts, by misusing or not using them, may become our destruction. We are God's chosen people, we are encircled, over-streamed, inundated with blessings. If we fail in the use thereof, we may, in the history of the Jews, see our own. God, by His Apostle, bids us see it therein. Israel was distinguished above all other nations, both by God's mercies and His chastisements. In the wilderness, they were fed with spiritual meat, refreshed with spiritual drink; their every want was supplied; even their very feet were tenderly guarded that they should not swell with their marches; their clothes were miraculously preserved; "their shoes waxed not old these forty years;" their wishes were heard as soon as formed. The Lord their God bare them as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that they went<sup>i</sup>; and yet all but two perished, before they came to the good land which was promised them. God seemed, as it were, to "lift" them "up," that He might "cast" them "down." So it was in their whole history. They dwelt alone both in light and in darkness; in the light of God's countenance, and the darkness of His displeasure. Mercy misused becomes severity; blessings neglected turn to a curse. God Himself forewarned them; "as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought<sup>k</sup>." Every blessing which He promised them, He threatened to turn, one by one, into a curse<sup>l</sup>, to give them the opposite curses to it; one by one He recounts their blessings, and then one by one He sets against them

<sup>i</sup> Deut. iv. 31.<sup>k</sup> Deut. xxviii. 63.<sup>l</sup> Deut. xxviii.

the fearful array of curses for which they were to be exchanged. The peculiar people is become a by-word and a proverb for their misery and desolation. “<sup>m</sup>Because they served not the Lord their God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things; therefore they should serve their enemies which the Lord their God sent against them, in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things.” Zion “the perfection of beauty,” the habitation of His Name, the place where His honour dwelt, “was cast down from heaven upon earth<sup>n</sup>;” and their sufferings, above those of every other nation, are a type of the Day of Judgement. He Who wept over her, as Man, as God, destroyed her. He, man’s Saviour, Intercessor, Who gave Himself for the life of the world, will condemn the world. He Who giveth Himself for our spiritual life, will condemn those who “<sup>o</sup>will not come unto Him, that they might have life,” or who having received the life, will not retain it.

What then? Shall we refrain, because there is danger? Neither can this be. Aweful as are God’s gifts in His Sacraments, we must receive them or perish. In this also, (which was the third point,) Israel is set forth as a pattern for us. It is not at our choice to receive God’s gifts or no. Israel was *compelled* to avail himself of his.

When in Egypt, they said, as they afterwards taunted their lawgiver, “let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians.” They wished to be left in their state of slavery; they wished not this contest, apparently so unequal, with their old masters; they

<sup>m</sup> Deut. xxviii. 47, 48.

<sup>n</sup> Lam. ii. 1.

<sup>o</sup> S. John v. 40.



feared that it might bring them into worse difficulties; the flesh-pots of Egypt reconciled them to their bondage; they were in body and mind degraded; they did not wish to be free, nor to face new and unknown dangers. Yet God brought them out; nor would it have availed them to refuse the means He gave them. If they did not pass the Red Sea, they perished; the "enemy" overtook them who "said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." If they refused the manna, they would starve; if the water from the rock, they perished with thirst.

And so of ourselves we should have lain helpless in the bondage of sin, and in sin must have perished; we could have had neither wish nor power to extricate ourselves; but God "sent His servants into the highways and hedges, and compelled us to come in." He has given us that awful warning, "<sup>p</sup> Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," and so by the charity of parents and the Church, we were for the time brought into that kingdom, by the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. When brought in, and of maturer age, He says to us, "<sup>q</sup> Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." Although all shall not be saved who partake of the Holy Sacraments, there is no revealed method of salvation without them. There is no revealed salvation from original or actual sin, (and this parents should in these days well remember) without Baptism; without the Holy Eucharist, there is no life.

<sup>p</sup> S. John iii. 5.

<sup>q</sup> Ib. vi. 53.

We have no choice left, but to make God our choice. We cannot go back. It would be the very sin for which many of Israel were destroyed, who would fain go back to Egypt, when God had brought them out thence. We must have great gifts, and there is danger in not using, as well as in abusing them. "The servant who hid his Lord's money in a napkin, was cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth." For every means of grace we shall have to give account before God, for those which men have neglected, as for those they have used; for the Communion offered on the next Lord's day, whether we partake of it, how we partake of it, what use we make of the gift therein bestowed upon us. I dare not say that there is no danger in approaching unduly this holy mystery. There is. God hath so willed, that with His gifts there should be danger: there is danger in every way but *one*. We are beset by dangers in life and in death; and there is throughout one only path of safety, the path of God's commandments. It is a strait and narrow path, and we dare not make it broad. There *is* peril, great peril in profaning these holy mysteries, that God may cut off such an one at once, as He did Uzzah for touching His ark, or the Corinthians. There is danger to one, who prepares himself to receive them, and then straightway returns to his old habits, and forgets what God has done for his soul, and all His benefits, lest God should leave him to himself, and since he will not retain His gifts, for the future not give him the gifts which he set at nought. There is danger to those who receive it frequently, if they slacken their diligence in clean-

sing themselves, lest the Sacrament become an ordinary thing. There is danger in not receiving whenever a person by any means can, because it is despising God's gift, and provoking Him to withdraw it, and give you over to a cold, unloving, careless temper. There is danger in every way of receiving It unduly; and in not receiving It at all, there is starvation and death of the soul. There is danger in every way but *one*; and that is, keeping your hearts diligently; preparing yourselves, when you can, carefully; praying to God fervently, to give you that holy frame of mind, which He will accept; receiving His gifts, whenever they are offered to you, humbly and thankfully; and bringing forth fruit enduringly and increasingly.

God has set dangers on all sides, that we may not shrink back, but may go onward in the one path, which leadeth unto Him. The wilderness shutteth us in; the sea is before, and the enemy behind: but God will place His pillar of fire between the enemy and us, and the sea shall part, and that which was our enemy, shall be our safeguard; a narrow path it is, but the sea which would devour us, should be a wall on the right hand and on the left to fence us in from straying, and protect us against the enemy, so will He conduct us to the promised land. We might have shrunk, (who would not have shrunk?) from coming to the all-holy mysteries, but that our Saviour saith, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." Come then we must; and so, though with trembling hearts and faint steps, mistrusting ourselves, but trusting in

God, we will come. We should mistrust our own weakness, but we should not mistrust God's strength. He invites, Who willeth not the sinner's death, Who warneth us that He may not strike, Who correcteth that He may not destroy. He Who hath appointed us this narrow path, will keep therein those who will be kept. He Who has made this Heavenly food needful for life, is able to keep us, if we commit ourselves to Him. He Who giveth us His Son to dwell in us, how shall He not cleanse us wholly, if we will be cleansed? He Who by giving us that Heavenly Body, keepeth us members of that body whereof He is the Head, how shall He not keep those members of Himself? How should Satan have power over the members of Christ? He will make each communion a means to enable you to receive the next more devoutly and profitably. He will increase your longing after that heavenly feast; He will make you more and more members of Him of Whom you partake, more fruitful branches of that Vine Whose richness He pours into you, richer in faith, stronger amid temptation, more victorious against Satan and yourselves. He will carry you on "from strength to strength, until you appear before" Him, the God of gods, and He remove you from His table here to His glorious presence in Heaven, from faith to sight, from longing to bliss, from spiritual union to see Him eye to eye, from these broken and occasional refreshments to be for ever with Him your Lord. Only come hither with hearty repentance, with lively faith, with real charity, with thankful remembrance of His Death, with stedfast purpose to amend, and as thou drawest



near, and art about to partake of the heavenly Food, cast thyself more wholly upon God, pray Him to deepen all that He would have in thee, and to take away all He would not have. Pray Him to increase thy longing, thy sense of need, of thy emptiness and His exceeding fulness, and He will fill thee, He will give thee all thou needest, He will give thee Himself.

I have dwelt upon the awefulness of the communion, not to deter any from partaking of it, but that *all* may be more careful *how* they partake of it. In every congregation there are some, it is to be feared, who, partaking of it as they do, receive it to their hurt. Others who are afraid to come, whom their minister would gladly see approach; yea, whom their Lord would welcome to His table. To abstain because a man will not part with an evil habit, were but wilfully to prefer darkness to light. Let such an one purpose stedfastly to break off what is evil in him, and come for strength to do it. If any be after all perplexed, the Church has taught him to come to any Minister, whom he may choose, and whom he can trust.

None is excluded, who excludeth not himself. "Holy things are for the holy;" and whoso will not be holy must depart. Men must part with their sins or with Christ. If they came, they could not taste the Lord's Supper; they are drinking the cup of Satan, and *cannot* partake of the cup of Christ; their souls are the dwelling-place of Satan, and must be purged by hearty repentance, else they *could* not be temples of the Holy Ghost. They could "press with their teeth" the elements of the Body

and Blood of Christ, but only to their own damnation. But to all who are faithful, to all who are truly penitent or earnestly desire to be so, to all who loathe their sins or wish to loathe them, to all who desire to be partakers of the holiness of God, to have strength against temptation, might to do God's will, life, light, glory, joy, peace, immortality, the love of God, the grace of Christ, the communion of the Holy Ghost, the Church says come, come "*taste* and see that the Lord is gracious," "come unto" Christ "all that travail, and are heavy laden, and He will refresh you."

If any one feel himself insecure, doubtful about his state, wish himself otherwise, but doubt about his own stedfastness, if he wish to move onwards towards Heaven, but know not how, if he wish to serve God more faithfully, and to have hope in his death, let him come; let him not wait as if he must be fitter to come. "God filleth the hungry, and the rich He sendeth empty away." We come here, not with the riches of our own works, but with our emptiness, and desiring of Him the riches of His grace. He asketh but a penitent earnest heart, conscious of its own weakness and desiring His strength. It is He Who calleth thee; bind thyself fast to Him; shrink not; confess to Him thy unworthiness, and desire, if so be, to "touch but the hem of His garment, He will make thee whole." Mistrust thyself, and trust Him. Ask of Him faith, and He will give it thee, and to thy faith He will give thee the pledge of everlasting life, which is in His Son. He will give thee the wedding-garment for His feast. How shouldest thou not be duly prepared, whom He,

Who inviteth thee, will, if thou ask, prepare ?  
 “Whoso cometh unto Me,” He says, “I will in no wise cast out.”

The more unworthy any of us feels himself, yea, though he be more unworthy than others, he is the less unworthy because he feels so. God “dwelleth in the lowly and contrite heart.” “He Who deigned,” to use the words of a prayer of a good Bishop\*, “He Who deigned to be lain in the manger of the senseless brute beasts ; He Who disdained not to be received in the house of Simon the Leper, nor rejected the woman who was a sinner approaching Him and touching Him, nor abhorred her polluted lips, nor the thief on the cross confessing Him ;” He will not disdain the decayed and leprous mansion of our soul, if we but confess with our whole hearts that “we are unworthy that He should come under our roofs, and that there is no fit place there where He may rest His head.” He came to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to cast out devils, to make the lame to walk, to raise the dead, to bind up the broken-hearted. If we be in earnest with our confession, He will make each Communion a means to lighten the burthen of our sins ; He will bind up our wounds, will unbind the grave-clothes of the death of sin wherewith we have anew bound ourselves ; He will give us strength to walk ; He will cast out Satan to whom each sin anew enslaves ; He will, by His indwelling Spirit, again “restore to us the help of His salvation, and stablish us with His free Spirit.”

We have yet a week left to prepare us. Let

\* Isa. lvii. 15.    \* Bp. Andrewes' Devotions, Tracts, No. 88, p. 92.

those who can, withdraw themselves more from the things of the world, avoid such employments as would engross them, especially as it draws towards its close, think more on God, His awefulness, His Majesty, His goodness, and the Judgement-Day. Let those whose duties are more fixed, at least strive to turn their thoughts to God and into themselves, in the intervals or even in the midst of their worldly callings. Let them do what they can. God is a gracious Master, Who accepteth according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not. Then come in full assurance of faith, with a "fearful," humble "admiration of that heaven" which is opened to you. Come trusting in God, that He Who giveth thee His Son will with Him freely give thee all things. Approach as if thou wert coming to the Saviour's side, to drink from it that "Blood which was shed for you and for many for the remission of sins;" and after thou hast received It, beware how thou again profane thyself, whom God has so hallowed. Christ maketh thee, like Saul, a new man, and giveth thee another heart: beware lest, like Saul, thou return to thy former state, lest the Evil Spirit, who has been cast out, "take seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and dwell within thee, and thy last state be worse than the first." "Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee." Guard diligently that holy thing committed to thee. Return home, like the shepherds who had seen the Saviour, Christ the Lord—glorifying and praising God for all the things which they had seen and heard; be very jealous over thyself,

<sup>t</sup> S. Matt. xii. 45.

<sup>u</sup> S. John v. 14.



and every inlet and approach of sin, over every thing, which had any thing to do with any of thy former sins, over any little acts or thoughts of covetousness or worldliness, or excess, or lightness of mind, or jesting, or thoughtlessness. For it may be that Satan, if he sees thee strengthened thus mightily in the armour of God, will not at once assail thee violently, but will tempt thee to lay aside thine armour piece by piece, until he shall have “made thee naked to thy shame before thine enemies,” and slay thee. But as thou art strengthened, walk strongly; “resist the devil, and he will flee from thee;” “draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto thee.” Thou canst not again become what thou wast before; thou must be better or worse. Go on in the strength of that heavenly food unto the Mount of God; so shall our Lord’s words be fulfilled in thee, “Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Now unto God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God—unto God, Who is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

## SERMON XV.

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### HOLY COMMUNION.—PRIVILEGES.

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St. John vi. 53—56.

*“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.”*

It is well, from time to time, to retrace in our minds the things which we already know; for the things of God are, like Himself, infinite, and we, at best, know them “in part” only; and if we imagine we know them, we are apt to let them slip. Yea, God has appointed that, unless continually refreshed, they should become more and more dull, and He takes from men that which they seem to have. On the other hand, He opens more and more their depths to such as, confessing their ignorance, pray God to impart to them of His knowledge, and strive to deepen and keep it by thinking and acting thereon. And

more especially the gifts of God in His Sacraments are so surpassing, and yet all which appears outwardly to the senses is so slight; they are so exceeding spiritual, and must be received and believed spiritually, and man is by nature so inclined to dwell on the things of sense; they must be searched deeply, and man of himself returns for ever to the surface, that it is of the more moment continually to fix our minds upon them, and for Ministers to go over things which seem to be well known. For God gives us not even our knowledge of Him once for all; He teaches us not once for all, in youth for instance; but, that we may the more entirely depend upon Him, He supplies us, according to our use of what He has given us, and our desires: all our lives we are learners; and at the end, His saints confess that they “see through a glass darkly,” although they do see what would be to ordinary Christians exceeding light. And, in truth, were this gift of God in His Sacrament better loved, and so better understood, instead of thinking monthly communions a great thing, people would desire weekly; and they who had weekly, would, as our Church once had, desire daily—their daily spiritual bread, as they daily receive that of the body.

I would then, although you have been often truly taught this, again call your minds to these holy mysteries, to stir up the remembrance of some who know, and to instruct such as know not; although in truth none can really know, save those who have tasted the heavenly Supper; yea, who have cleansed and consecrated their souls diligently, that the King of Glory may come in under their roof; who have

habitually been faithful and earnest communicants. They only can know it, to whom “not flesh and blood, but our Father which is in heaven hath revealed” it.

In this teaching, I am not giving you my way of understanding Holy Scripture, but that which the whole Church, throughout all the world, learnt from God. The two Sacraments, then, I would premise, are unlike every thing else even in the intense fullness of the Christian life. Other gifts of God are means of grace; prayer, fasting, almsgiving, reading of God’s Word, the rehearsal of our Belief, contrition for wrong committed, the blessing given by the Priest in the name of God, meditation upon God, are in their several ways means of grace; i. e., they are acts appointed by God, in which He looks favourably upon us, and which, when done aright, He makes the means and channels of increased refreshment and strength to the Christian’s soul. But the Sacraments are more: Jews, nay Heathen, might pray, fast, and give alms; and of Cornelius we know that his “prayers were heard,” and his “alms had in remembrance before God.” The Jews had many and great favours of God, many and great means whereby they might be in favour with God, so that “God had not dealt so with any other nation;” but they had not, could not of course have, the Christian Sacraments; they had “images and shadows” of them, as of the other “good things” under the Gospel, but the substance they had not. These are part of the glories of the Incarnation of the Son of God; part of the attendant train of blessings, which, when He descended from the bosom of the Father, “for us men



and our salvation," dawned upon man. They are gifts of "God manifest in the flesh." To name no other excellencies, they, 1) lie as the foundation of all our other blessings, the means by which every thing else which is a blessing or a means of grace becomes such: for, 2) which is saying the same in another way, they are means whereby we are originally united with Christ, or are kept cemented to Him. And hence our Church says that there are "two Sacraments generally necessary to salvation;" i. e., necessary to all alike: and whereas other holy rites are means of grace to particular persons, (as Ordination to the Priests,) or to particular states of life, as the marriage rite to the married, these are necessary to all, as forming the bond which unites them with their Redeemer. Other means of grace are indispensable. Without prayer there would be no life in any, yet prayer makes not a man a Christian, nor a member of Christ, but is accepted by God, especially from those who, having been made members of Christ, pray to God in Christ, being entitled to pray in the name of Christ, and have their prayers offered to the Father through the intercession of the great High Priest, and sprinkled with His blood. Baptism then engrafts us into Christ, makes us members of the True Vine, members of the Son of God, and so ourselves sons of God: the Holy Eucharist keeps up the life thus imparted to us, by communicating to us the life of Christ, yea Christ Himself. The first imparts, the other sustains, life; hence the one is spoken of as a birth, "of water and the Spirit," the other is conveyed by bread the chief staff and stay of life. With-

out the birth, there can be no room for sustenance, and so, without Baptism, can there be no Communion; but neither will the birth support life without after-nourishment; so neither will it avail to have been born even of God, unless the life, which is of God, be supported by the means appointed by God. It will not profit us to have been baptized, unless we continually seek renewal and strengthening of that life by His Body and Blood. Other things again are necessary to prevent life being lost; God's medicinal hand by sorrows to remove the diseases which by sin we are contracting; His cleansing hand in absolving us from our guilt; love, or charity, without which life is extinct; fasting, without which the flesh might get the mastery over us and destroy our life; prayer to God, without Whom neither our earthly bread could nourish our bodies, nor our spiritual bread our souls; prayer for our daily bread: yet is not prayer our daily bread, but Christ is the true Bread, given to us for our life through His Sacraments. These remain the chief, however necessary other things may be; Baptism, our birth; the Lord's Supper, our sustenance. Nor should we doubt that our birth and our food are the chief causes of our bodily life, although without bodily exercise or clothing, or when we are sick, medicine, our bodily food would not nourish or might injure us. Even so, Baptism and the Lord's Supper remain the well-springs of the Christian life, although spiritual cold, or want of love and charity, might yet destroy our life; yea even the Holy Eucharist might in some cases, be hurtful to men; whence the Ancient Church, out of charity to men's

souls, kept back some from it. And these two Sacraments being the middle-point of the Christian life, it may be one reason why that life is so sickly among us, that they are in these days often so little regarded. *Baptism* is performed once, in infancy, when people know nothing of it, and then perhaps thought no more of, or thought of as something which is necessary to be done, and has been done for us. It has been *done*, and so people think it is *done with*. They will recollect perhaps the day of their marriage, or of the birth or loss of their relations or wives or children, or some great thing which happened to them. But the day whereon the greatest thing which could happen to any created being, the being made members of the ever-blessed Son of God, Who is God, this is passed over unthankfully; yea, what God then did for them is scarcely thought of, further than that they are somehow Christians, and without Baptism should not have been such. *The Holy Communion* men cannot so pass over, because it does not, like Baptism, take place once for all, but is oftentimes repeated, oftentimes offered. Yet It too people show by their acts how little they appreciate; they receive It on certain days or times, as a duty to be done, but they are too often not careful to purify themselves for It, or treasure It in their souls afterwards; they go thither, not expecting any great thing, and they return to be the same men they were before; and so they continue the same, and make very little and meagre progress towards heaven, so that it can scarcely be told whether they are going on, or standing still, or falling back.

I would then now, by the blessing of Almighty

God, set forth, in connection with our Lord's Discourse in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, something of the blessedness of the Communion, as He has spoken of it. In taking as a certain truth, that in this passage He was speaking of the Holy Communion which He purposed to institute, I am not following my own judgement, or that of any man, but that of the Ancient Church, and, after her, of our own. For our Church, in applying to the comfort of communicants words taken out of this chapter, "as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart, and lively faith, we receive that Holy Sacrament, for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood; then *we dwell in Christ*, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us," shows that she understands our Lord's words to apply to His Supper.

First then, our Lord declares, as I said, that "He is the true Bread," and that the true real Bread is He. This He says in contrast not only to the worldly wishes of the Jews, but to all which God had before done for them. He had lately, by a miracle, fed them in a desert place, and they sought to be fed in like way again; the Father had fed their fathers in the wilderness with manna, "bread from heaven," "angels' food," and they sought to be fed by food which should come from heaven, as that whereon their fathers were fed. Our Lord says that He has such food to give, but more heavenly. *That* food was but a likeness of the food which He had to give: the food which He *had* given them was "meat which perisheth;" the food which their Fathers ate, although it came down from heaven, had no power to give life; "their



fathers did eat manna, and were dead ;” but “this is the Bread Which came down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die<sup>a</sup>.” It is then of two great miracles that our Lord is speaking ; forty years was all Israel fed with manna in the wilderness, five thousand had He fed with five barley loaves and two small fishes ; yet the gift whereof He spake was a greater miracle than these, as though He would say, “Thou shalt see greater things than these.”

2. Our Lord is speaking of actual food, food given directly by God, and received by man, and nourishing him. He is not speaking of spiritual communion with God simply, of lifting up the heart to God, of meditating on Him, or any spiritual exercises which the Jews might perform. He is speaking not of what man might *do*, but of what he might *receive* ; of food, which God had, which Christ would, give him. “<sup>b</sup>Open thy mouth wide,” He would say, “and I will fill it.” Man herein has no part but to receive ; he makes not the food for himself ; It is the “true Bread from heaven,” which the “Father giveth<sup>c</sup> ;” “this is the Bread which cometh from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.”

3. This miracle whereof our Lord speaks, this “living Bread,” is a fruit of His holy Incarnation and Nativity. “My Father giveth you the *true* Bread from heaven<sup>d</sup>,” “*for* the Bread of God is He Which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world ;” i. e., since He was *the* life of the world, what was before Him could have in it no true nourishment, since He was not in it. “<sup>e</sup>In Him we

<sup>a</sup> Ver. 50.<sup>b</sup> Ps. lxxxi. 10.<sup>c</sup> S. John vi. 32.<sup>d</sup> Ib.<sup>e</sup> Acts xvii. 28.

live and move and have our being." What was before Him taught man about Him, promised Him, gave some traces of Him, but was not Himself. Now that by His unutterable love and goodness towards us, He hath come down to dwell among us, the "true Bread of life" is "come down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

4. That true Bread is not only *among* us, but is *received in* us; "this is that Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof." The Holy Supper is not a gazing up into heaven after Christ. No thoughts of Christ, however holy; no longings after Him, however sanctified; no wish to be with Him, however purified; no thoughts on His Cross and Passion and Precious Death, however devout; no devotion of self to Him; no acknowledgment of Him as our Priest, Prophet, King, and God; no setting Him up in our hearts as (with the Father and the Holy Ghost) the One Object of our love; no reliance upon Him as the only Anchor of our soul, however real, comes up to the truth. We ought to meditate on Him, long for Him, desire to be with Him, rely on Him, devote ourselves to Him, pledge ourselves to obey Him, and do what we have pledged. We should look for His coming, avow Him, be ready in all things, in suffering as in joy, to be partakers with Him, partakers of His Cross, and Death, and Burial. All this we should be at all times, but all this does not make us yet partakers of Him, for man cannot make himself a partaker of Him; He must give Himself. As He gave Himself to the Death upon the Cross for our sins, so in the Holy Eucharist must He, if we are to be partakers of Him, give

Himself to us. We have of Him only what He giveth. All Christian graces, although His work, are but messengers to prepare the way before Him. Hope but putteth us in that expectant, longing state which He rewardeth ; Faith but openeth the door to receive Him ; Love or Charity but cleanseth the chamber of our hearts, which He is to inhabit ; Repentance but breaketh the heart, and maketh it that contrite or broken spirit, wherein it pleaseth Him to dwell ; but all this is not yet He. He, "the Bread of life, which came down from heaven," must come down also into our hearts, if we are to be partakers of Him. The Communion is not a mere going up of our hearts to Christ, but a coming down of Him to us. Well indeed may the ancient service bid us, "lift up your hearts ;" and well may we answer, "we lift them up unto the Lord." Well may we lift them up to meet the Lord, but it is to receive Him that we lift them up, not to embrace Him for ourselves. The outward emblems, bread and wine, which we see, would in themselves not lift us up to Christ, but depress us, except so far as we know them to be emblems and pledges, channels of Him and His Presence to our souls, as they are made to us His Heavenly Body and Blood. Of themselves they are plainly slight and insufficient to convey any spiritual benefit. They are emblems of nothing but His humiliation, forms of earth, such as He took. They tell us that He, Very God, took upon Him a form of earth, and that that form was broken ; their very breaking speaks His greater humiliation, and that to receive a humble Saviour, we must also be humbled ; that we must not look to gain Him for

ourselves, but bow ourselves to the earth, and pray Him to have pity upon and give life to our dust.

There are, namely, in the Communion, two parts:

1. a Commemoration, or "showing forth of our Lord's death until He come;" and 2. a Communion or receiving of Christ in the believer's soul; and they who mistake these two, have been in danger of destroying both. In the whole action of the Communion, the Priest, and the people with and through him, commemorate or make mention and show forth the Death of our Lord. The Priest offers to God the bread and wine as memorials of the One precious Sacrifice on the Cross, and entreats Him by these emblems of His most precious Death and Passion, to have mercy upon us and the whole Church; he breaks the bread, and pours out the wine, as he was commanded, as Christ's Body was broken and His Blood shed upon the Cross. He offers to the Father the Body and Blood of Christ Sacramentally present, as the Great High Priest evermore pleads by His glorious Wounds in heaven. The whole assembly joins with the priest as he does it in the name of all, and presents their faith, their alms, and their oblations before God. But in the actual Communion it is not so. Herein we do nothing but receive; herein is no commemoration, no showing forth His death, but something far other and higher, a receiving Him. Herein is no action of our own, save that of resignation of our whole selves to His holy will and pleasure, a wish to receive what He will be pleased to impart, which saith, "Amen, so come Lord Jesus!" "Behold the servants of the Lord, be it unto us according to Thy word."



And what is this gift, which He imparteth, and which we are to desire at His hands? My brethren, it is a high mystery which I am to declare, but it is He Who saith it.—It is Himself. It is bread and wine which our bodies receive; but it is not mere bread and wine; it is His Flesh, His Blood. “I am the living Bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever; and the Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. . . . He that eateth *Me*, shall live by Me. . . . He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.” Observe how often He repeats the words, and how He changes them, one for the other, to impress the truth upon us the more, and to encourage us to believe it. He calls this which He will give us, Bread, living Bread, the true Bread from Heaven, the Meat which endureth unto everlasting life, the Bread of life, the Bread which came down from Heaven, His own Flesh, His Blood, *His Own Self*, and this He saith, He will give to be eaten and drunk by those who believe in Him: “Whoso (amazing words) eateth Me.” This is indeed a great mystery, and we are weak; so not only He repeats it so often and so solemnly, but saith yet further, “My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed,” i. e., not like earthly food, which can support only an earthly not a real life, not like the manna, which the Israelites ate and died, but *real* food, bread which shall nourish our real eternal life, “whereof he who eateth shall live for ever.” For

this strong saying of our Lord, Who is "the truth and the life," must needs kindle even a weak faith; yea, it seems as if in compassion to *our* misgivings, to relieve our doubts, He graciously addressed us, "Fear not, although it is a great thing, which I say; it is I, be not afraid; *I* say unto thee, My flesh is true, real, yea the only true, imperishable, food; My Blood which I shed for your life, is your true drink; that drink, after which you shall not again thirst."

This then is, thus far, our Lord's teaching, that the miracle, which He thus worketh *in* us, is greater than the greatest miracles, which His Father had worked hitherto or He worked; that it was *real* food which He gave and which man received; that this food was really eaten and drunk by us; the outward elements strengthening and refreshing the body; the inward part, the Body and Blood of Christ, the soul; that in this eating and drinking we receive Christ Himself, imparting Himself to us.

Our Lord tells us not *how* these things can be, but He doth tell us *wherein* His gifts consist. He tells us the height and depth of these our mercies, although we have no thoughts to conceive them, nor words to tell the manner thereof. It is through His indwelling in us. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him," and then, at once to convey to us the greatness of the gift, and to assure us that the indwelling, whereof He speaks, is real and actual, He subjoins, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." We must not "stagger through unbelief" at

the greatness of this saying, although we dare scarcely speak of it in other words than our Lord hath used; yet since I am commissioned to declare to you the counsel of God herein, I must not leave it unsaid, lest I should hide from you His gifts. Our Lord saith then, that as truly and as really as the ever-Blessed Father dwelt in Him, the Son, and was His Life, in that the Being of the Son was derived from the Being of the Father, and since the Father and Son are One God, the Father dwelleth in the Son, and the Son in the Father—so really and so truly does our Lord and God dwell in them who eat His Flesh and drink His Blood. It is then not a figure, a likeness, an image, but a reality—a reality spiritual, and therefore unseen and unfelt by our bodily senses, but more real than any thing which we see with our bodily eyes, or handle with our hands. It is a real living truth, that Christ dwelleth in us, and is our life. But this is not all. For Christ dwelleth in us, as God, and we in Him. So now as the Father loveth the Son, in Whom He is, since we, not in a figure but in reality, though a spiritual reality, are members of Christ and in Christ, the Father loveth us, as being parts of His Son, Whom as His Only-Begotten Son He loveth with the love of God, i. e., Infinite, Unutterable. For His Son only and His Holy Spirit can, as being God with Him, receive all the fulness of His Infinite Love, and now we are parts of Him, Whom He loveth infinitely. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the love of God!

There is however one word, which our Lord here useth, to which we must take good heed. He saith

not, "cometh to us," "visiteth us." This too had been a great thing that He should visit us as He did the Patriarchs and holy men of old; yea this was the joy and gladness of Paradise, that at eventide the Lord God walked in the garden and spake to Adam. But now He doth more. He not only cometh to us, as a friend might meet a friend, but He entereth into us; He not only visiteth us from time to time and "maketh Himself known" to us, "by the breaking of bread," but He *dwelleth* in us. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, *dwelleth* in Me and I in him." We have, as I said, no other words to speak of this, than those which He has given us. But this the words must signify, that as of old (probably now also) the devils actually dwelt, lived, inhabited in the bodies of the unhappy men given up to them, so now He, having bound and spoiled and cast out the strong man, dwelleth in us, our souls and bodies and spirits, making us, as St. Peter saith, "partakers of the Divine Nature." He dwelleth in us really and truly, and, as long as we grieve Him not away, ever-blessedly. Yea, this is our hope, our comfort, our joy, our glory, that we are not our own; but that as many as receive Him, are through Him, dwelling in them, sons of God, in that they are members of the Son of God; that He dwelleth in them, imparting to them His holiness, sanctifying them, subduing what remains of their evil nature, giving them the victory over Satan and themselves, making them meet to be with Him in glory, purifying them as He is pure, making them wholly His, working His works in them, that He may crown His work in them at the Great Day.



“‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Yea, thus united with Him, thus joined with Him, nothing can separate us. All things but show forth His love; things good, in that they are His blessings; things evil, in that He makes them work to good; “all things are yours,” while “you are Christ’s;” for “Christ is God’s.”

And now what shall I more say? For what can be wanting, where Christ is? To whom Christ is given, all is given. For how should God not give all things, to whom, as for whom, He hath given His Only-Begotten Son? Yet hath He of His great goodness, singled out some chief things, which we should be anxious about, and which He hath thus given us.

Through this, we shall have *no wants*. “He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.” They in whom Christ dwell, have no wants; yea, want, sickness, suffering, are to them, so far as Christ dwelleth in them, blessings; yea, and every creature; for all are sent by God, and God loveth them, and these are but messengers of His love. They have *protection and safety*, for “<sup>s</sup> He that is in them is mightier than he that is in the world;” “<sup>h</sup> the Father is greater than all, and none can pluck them out of the Father’s hand.” They have *spiritual wisdom*; for the anointing Spirit “abideth in them, and teacheth them all things” whereof they have need. They have *holi-*

<sup>f</sup> Rom. viii. 35, 38.    <sup>g</sup> 1 S. John iv. 4.    <sup>h</sup> S. John x. 29.

ness, for they have been “<sup>i</sup> made partakers of His holiness.” They have, as they may trust, *forgiveness of sins*; for He saith, “the Bread which I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world;” and again in the holy words in which He consecrated for ever the sacred elements, “This is My Body, which is given *for you*.” “This is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.” They have *eternal life*; for He saith, “whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life.” These words again must be well weighed, for they are full of comfort and of warning. He saith not, ‘Whoso presseth with his teeth the holy elements,’ but “whoso eateth His flesh and drinketh His blood,” whoso really “cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out,” but will admit him to His supper in His kingdom, will give him “the living Bread, which came down from Heaven,” even His own “Flesh, which He gave for the life of the world.” To him who openeth the door, his Lord fulfilleth His promise, “<sup>k</sup> I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Again our Lord saith, “hath eternal life;” “hath,” not “shall have.” Our Lord puts you off to no distant day (though it may be at some little time hence that it shall be *full-filled*), but He giveth it thee *now*. As it was said to Adam, “in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die,” although the part of the sentence which was not forgiven, was not fulfilled until after many hundred years, yet he carried about with him, as it were, the earnest of his death; so He saith to thee, “in the

<sup>i</sup> Heb. xii. 10.<sup>k</sup> Rev. iii. 20.

day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt live." Thou "hast eternal life," although the world seeth it not, nor knoweth it; thou *hast* it, though it be "hid with Christ in God;" thou *hast* it, although as yet in the beginning only and the earnest thereof, to be fulfilled when Christ shall come openly in the last day, not secretly only to thee in His sacraments; thou *hast* it, and no one, neither man nor devil, can take it from thee, unless thou forfeit it. "He *hath* eternal life," yea, and he shall have it; and death, which ends every thing earthly, shall not end it. Herein is the victory over the grave and death and hell; for He saith, "hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Yea, and since we still shrink from death and the worm and corruption and foulness and dishonour, which these our bodies must undergo before they return to their dust, four times He repeats the words, "*I* will raise him up at the last day." The resurrection of our bodies is no common thing, but a great miracle. They are under sentence of death, and have by sin lost their first gift of life; and so Christ, as a pledge of this miracle, giveth us a yet greater miracle, whereby *we* may be assured that it shall be fulfilled, His own sinless Flesh, a cure of death, and full of life; whereby "though we die, yet shall we live." With His Body He giveth to our sinful bodies everlasting life, by being joined to and cleansed by His Body; yea, He saith not, "they shall be raised," for so they might be to condemnation, but "*I* will raise them up at the last day;" and whom Christ raiseth, how shall He not raise in mercy, taking him as it were by the hand, and bidding him enter into His joy?

And now, my brethren, I have named, as I could, some chief benefits of this Holy Supper, although all which I have said is but a faint shadow of that Holy Mystery, whereby "God dwelleth in us and we in God." And as it is God's greatest favour to us in this our pilgrimage, so the hope that we may not unworthily receive it, is our highest joy, and each repeated offer of it seems a pledge of salvation, in that, notwithstanding our many sins and our often infirmities, God hath not separated us, (as we hope) from the Communion of His Son, but still refines in us what is base, renews in us what is decayed, strengthens in us what is weak, gives life to what was dead, through our union with His Son.

The Holy Eucharist then is a great gift, greater than our weak, yea, than our highest, thoughts can reach to. But we may not think of it only as a gift, i. e., not as that which if we use, it is a blessing, and if we use it not, we are none the worse for, except that we lose it. Such cannot be the case with any of God's gifts; for whoso despiseth the gifts of God, despiseth Him, and no one can despise Him and go unpunished. Our daily earthly bread is the gift of God, yet such a gift, as if we were to go without it, our bodily life would perish. Even so is it with the life of our souls, "He that hath the Son, hath life;" but it follows, "He that hath not the Son, hath *not* life." Whoso, in faith, receiveth the Holy Eucharist, with it receiveth Him Who is life; and whoso receiveth it not, and by reason of his age may receive it, hath not life. Our Lord, Who saith the one, saith the other also. He saith, "whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life;" and He saith



also, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." *He* Himself has given this awful seal to both His Sacraments. He said, "Except a man be born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," and so He compelled us to come in by the way which He had appointed, Baptism "of water and the Spirit." Now that we have been brought into that kingdom, He hath said we cannot remain members of it, cannot have life, unless in His Sacrament we feed on Him. It is not I, it is not a messenger or minister of God who tells you this; it is God Himself; it is Christ Who died for you, Who telleth you, that unless you seek for the life which He gives, in the way in which He has appointed for you, if you seek for health, or strength, or salvation, in any ways of your own, yea, if you seek for Him where He is not to be found, where He has not taught you to seek for Him, you have no life in you; you are already dead, having separated yourselves from Him Who is Life.

So holy, so awful, so necessary is this great gift of God, which He on the next Lord's day offereth to each of us. But "<sup>1</sup>wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the Most High God?" What is the marriage-garment, wherewith we may come to this so holy feast, prepared for us, that so we may not be cast out? I can give no better answer than that which our Church gives us as the conclusion of her Catechism—and we may be the more trustful because she gives it us—true repentance, a stedfast purpose to lead a new life, a lively

<sup>1</sup> Mic. vi. 6.

faith in God's mercy through Christ, a thankful remembrance of His Death, and charity with all. Of our own, we have most of us nothing to bring but our sins; broken vows, half-formed and soon-abandoned resolves; yea, of that which God hath supplied, we have mostly only grace half-acted upon; weakly faith, wasting itself in wishes; repentance to be repented of; an unthankful thankfulness; a charity which loveth little. But it is not what we bring for the past, but what we wish to receive for the future; it is not our past poverty, but our desire of the true riches; yea, what is required of us is our acknowledgment of our poverty (for though some—and they will be found the most abased—are very much richer than others, all are infinitely poor compared to His fulness), a broken heart, a desire of the holiness which a man has not, or more than he has, a desire of fuller love, of greater thankfulness, of firmer stedfastness, and a strong purpose, with God's help, to lead a holier life, more wedded to Him, strong in that strength which He through His Incarnate Son supplies.

And for the next week of preparation, use and make what time you can. Our fathers used not so long since (even when daily service had declined), yet at least to assemble themselves (whosoever wished to be communicants), in God's house during the week before, there to lament their sins before Him, that so having confessed their sins, they might, on the next Lord's day, be more worthy partakers of the Holy Communion. It would be a gladdening earnest of your sincerity (gladdening it might be to yourselves also), if such as any how could, would at

some inconvenience prepare themselves by coming hither on the Wednesday and Friday in next week. More gladdening still, if, having so begun, such as could would habitually come. And yet what hinders very many in this congregation, but the listless irreligious habit of these last days, to regard all their time on the week days as their own? What but the coldness, and lifelessness, and undevotionalness, which forsooth looks forward to join in the endless halleluiahs of eternity, but meantime would almost think it a strange thing to be invited for two hours during the week to worship God in His temple, which is the image of Heaven? Ye can hardly mean this in earnest, my Brethren, and yet what else means the habitual thinness of the congregations during the week, when every house almost in the whole front of this town<sup>m</sup> might (to say the least) send forth its worshipper? The very heathen will rise up in judgement and condemn such slothfulness.

Use then what time you can; and let such as are lawfully hindered withdraw their thoughts, when they can, from their necessary business, seize diligently such snatches of time, as occur in all business, to see whether you do indeed wish for a holier walk with God, more faithfully to fulfil His holy commandments; to think on the heavenly gift which is promised them, and pray to God to make them, who are in themselves unworthy, worthy partakers. For we must needs be unworthy to gather up the crumbs under His table, yet whom God makes worthy must needs be so. Pray to Him to increase

<sup>m</sup> Weymouth. 1838.

your faith, to deepen your repentance, to heighten your love, to make steadfast your unsteadfastness. Deny yourselves, at least on the day of your Saviour's suffering, in token of your repentance and your wish to prefer God, your only Good, to His creatures. Then come, cast yourselves upon Him, ask of Him more faith; bring before Him all your sins, all your trials, all your troubles, weaknesses, sorrows; ask Him to take away what He sees good; to bear for you, what He thinks fit that you should bear, to sanctify what He doth not take away, and He will give you, each according to what you ask; more to them that ask more; but the poorest, weakest, that in sincerity and humility cometh unto Him, He hath said, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, "I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT," he "shall live by Me, and I will raise him up at the Last Day."



## SERMON XVI.

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### ST. BARNABAS—CHRISTIAN KINDLINESS AND CHARITY.

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Acts iv. 36, 37.

*“And Joses, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, son of consolation), a Levite, of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles’ feet.”*

BLESSED saint! who thus at the very outset of his course, and immediately upon his conversion, brought forth such fruits, that, out of the whole multitude that believed, he was singled out for the praise of the Holy Ghost by the Apostles’ mouth. When “*all* that believed had *all* things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all, as every man had need,” yet was he chief among chief. *All*, who were “possessors of lands and houses” did the like, and all, the very least, shall have their praise of God, one by one, at the Great Day. Yet he, as an earnest of a higher crown and a greater reward, is chosen out of all by name, and is handed down to us, wherever the Gospel is preached, as *the* “son of consolation.” As an example of

fidelity, he is set over against one, Ananias, *the* instance of dissimulation; a vessel of God's mercy over against the example of His judgements; "<sup>a</sup>God working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure," as in that unhappy one Satan ruled, "putting into *his* heart to lie to the Holy Ghost." As the one has for eighteen centuries, and shall, while the world lasts, be a bye-word and a warning against his sins, covetousness and lying, so, till time shall be no more, is the very name of St. Barnabas the herald of his good deeds and of God's acceptance of this outset of his piety. His former name is well-nigh forgotten by us; we scarcely know certainly what it was; he bears the title, even on earth, of God's acceptance; his name bespeaks him, as above others, the refresher of his brethren, and in them of Christ his Lord and Judge. His very name is an earnest of his final sentence, that being "merciful," he "shall obtain mercy."

Such was he in the outset; and more blessed far, that such, yea, more than such, he continued to the end. Blessed, that he who cast the price of his lands, as a new convert, in all humility at the Apostles' feet, was himself (in a manner, out of the appointed course,) raised up to be an Apostle; God appointing, as it were, a new thing, and enlarging the number of the Apostles, to receive him whom He so approved, and who, when invisibly summoned, had "forsaken all to follow" Christ. What Simon Magus would have purchased by money and was accursed, he, by the abandonment of his money, attained, and having therein discovered an Apostolic spirit, had an

<sup>a</sup> Phil. ii. 13.

Apostolic reward. Happier yet, that he so discharged his high office, as again to have brought down the praise of his Lord. "He was a good man," Holy Scripture saith<sup>b</sup>, "and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." What words are these, my Brethren! "Full of the Holy Ghost." We have often heard them, and so our ears have become dull to them. We know but little of it, and so we pass it by, as were it some ordinary thing. Yet so does Scripture entitle only one human being besides, and him that one, who was chosen to the high dignity of being first in "the noble army of martyrs," first to be "baptised in the Baptism" of his Lord, to share His death, to confess Him before men, to be "confessed by Him before His Father Which is in heaven." For although the Apostles bid their brethren, "look out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost," yet among the seven so chosen, Holy Scripture singles out St. Stephen only for this great title; "<sup>c</sup>they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." This it repeats of him, just on the eve of his martyrdom, when his whole countenance, gleaming with the holy light of the Indwelling Spirit, was visibly, to all who beheld, "like the face of an angel," and he, through that Spirit, saw through the heaven of heavens, to the very Throne of God, "and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." To him alone, besides St. Barnabas, does Scripture bear witness, that he "was full of the Holy Ghost." Doubtless it was so with the twelve; it may have belonged to those who were thought worthy to be called to be Apostles; as,

<sup>b</sup> Acts xi. 24.<sup>c</sup> Acts vi. 5.

when our Lord called His "chosen vessel," St. Paul, at once to the faith and to his Apostleship, Ananias was sent unto him that he might "be baptized and wash away his sins," and "receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost<sup>d</sup>;" doubtless, not for the time only (as is related of others), but to abide in him. Yet so far it has pleased God, that of these two only it should be recorded that they were "full of the Holy Ghost." Nay, the mysterious depth of the title is thereby enlarged, that Scripture does so speak of One besides, Him "in Whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt," our very Blessed Lord Himself. Again, think of the title in itself; he saith not only as at other times, "filled," but "*full* of the Holy Ghost," i. e., not only filled for a time, but lastingly, abidingly; and "full" of Whom? of the Holy Ghost, of God. Why, if we have from time to time some faint visitings of Him; if we are stirred up to conquer self more resolutely, to serve God more fervently, to deny ourselves more for God's glory or man's salvation, or in the language of our Church, "<sup>f</sup>feel in ourselves the Spirit of Christ mortifying the works of the flesh and our earthly members, and drawing up our minds to high and heavenly things, it filleth us with joy, and doth greatly establish and confirm our faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ." Men treasure through years the memory of such moments as these; amid much weakness and unsteadiness of purpose they turn back in thought to these bright spots; they often build their hope of salvation on them, although love has since waxed cold. But to be ever

<sup>d</sup> Acts xxii. 16, ix. 17.<sup>e</sup> Col. ii. 9.<sup>f</sup> Art. xvii.



thus, to be ever *filled* with the Holy Ghost, to be able to endure in every part *His* fiery presence, which consumeth all that is corrupt or earthly or defiled, “<sup>g</sup>with the Spirit of Judgement and the Spirit of burning,” how can our dull hearts even think of this? “<sup>h</sup>God is a consuming fire,” and where He dwelleth, He must consume all that is alien or offensive to Him; and He dwelleth in us, in proportion as we shrink not from that burning touch, which (often with pain that reaches to the very inmost soul) cleanses and makes us meet for His indwelling by consuming what is unfit. What then must he have been in whose whole self He dwelt; who was “full of the Holy Ghost;” whose capacity of God’s Presence had been so enlarged, in whom the earthly dross had been so refined, the interior of the temple of his body so purified from mere earthly garnishings, that it could be filled with God, full in every part, nothing excluded, every thought, wish, desire, feeling, action, motion, pulse of his whole frame, instinct with God; every chord of his whole heart vibrating truly to the touch of God, and answering to no other impulse, self wholly subdued, and “God all in all,” his spirit, soul, and body? Shall I say, that this is to be “full of the Holy Ghost?” No! I have spoken only of some accidents of it, some modes of His manifestation, some things without which it could not be, but what it in itself is, he only could tell who himself were so filled, or God Who filleth him. Others could as little conceive of it as of the joys of Heaven, which heart hath never conceived, and to which it were most like. It were probably as little

<sup>g</sup> Isa. iv. 4.<sup>h</sup> Deut. iv. 24.

like what most Christians can guess of, as the mid-day sun is to the first faint gleam of twilight, which breaks through our darkness. For it is of God, yea the *fulness* of God; and of God none can know but through God, communicating Himself unto them. What they in whom God's Holy Spirit thus partially putteth forth Itself are in their holiest moments, can furnish but a faint image of them in whom He dwelleth in His "fulness." Divine light and heat, like their visible emblems, when brought together in one, are beyond all measure intenser.

Yet with these words so great is added another quality, which the world fancies it esteems, and which they who would be religious often despise, that he "was a *good* man;" good, not in the sense in which our Lord says "none is, save God," good<sup>i</sup> in Himself; but in that sense in which God is also said to be good<sup>k</sup>, benevolent, kind to us His creatures. And so God hath joined together what is higher far than man can conceive, and which man cannot understand except in so far as he is made partaker of God, and what seems to him a light and easy thing, in order to show that no grace or virtue is to be taken singly, but that one animating spirit must run through and cement them all together, even that Holy Spirit wherewith the Apostle St. Barnabas was "filled." So would He teach us that nothing is light in itself, but that as every sin and every lie cometh and is connected with the father of lies, so every thing may be sanctified and bear the impress of God. So in this case, what, when severed from other graces, may become what is called

<sup>i</sup> ἀγαθός.<sup>k</sup> χρηστός.

mere good-nature, or an easy kindliness of disposition, which pains not others, because so to do would pain itself, and pains them not even for their good, may also become worthy of the praise of Holy Scripture, and is by it abundantly praised. It is singled out for praise in one who was "full of the Holy Ghost," nay, is akin to an attribute of Almighty God Himself, His loving-kindness, that essential quality of the Divine nature, whereby He imparteth Himself to all His creatures who are capable thereof, "is loving unto every man, and His mercy is over all His works."

Yet neither is this all. The words are not alone, but are a key to other Scriptures and to the life of the blessed Saint whose memory we this day cherish. In every character there are probably, whether in good or evil, some one or two qualities prominent. Bad men have rarely all vices; and God's saints have, for the most part, some one more conspicuous excellence. Of course no excellence can stand altogether alone, for God's Holy Spirit will not dwell with sin. It will not manifest Itself in one way only, but will gradually absorb and penetrate the whole man, and though acting in different degrees, will still act in all, subdue all, be apparent in all. As the light of day penetrates every corner of this house of God, although in some places more brightly, so must the light of God, or God Who is Light, reach every corner of the Christian's heart, although in some more purely. "The whole body" must be "full of light, and no part dark <sup>m</sup>," although the light enter into one part more

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxlv. 9.

<sup>m</sup> S. Luke xi. 36.

visibly. And hereby may a person best know whether any thing which seems good in him is a mere natural quality or a Christian grace, namely by this, whether it be in him alone, or nearly alone, or whether the whole man, his whole temper of mind and actions, be in the course of being made subject to the love of God. In whatever degree this be taking place in him, in that degree he may hope that whatever good thing is found in him is the work of the Indwelling Spirit of God. Yet of Christian graces is that also true, “<sup>n</sup>every man hath his own gift of God, one in this manner and another in that manner.” Even in the Saints of Holy Scripture, we see some one quality conspicuous; in Abraham, unhesitating faith; in Isaac, tranquil patient expectation; in Job, patience; in Joseph, purity; in Daniel, incorruptible self-denial from boyhood onwards; in Moses, a holy zealous meekness; in Joshua, a leader’s, in Elijah, a prophet’s zeal; in St. John, love for his Master’s Person and for his brethren; in St. Peter, for His Office; in St. John Baptist, self-denying austerity: in St. Paul, the earnestness of one to whom much had been forgiven; in St. Barnabas, goodness of heart. “<sup>o</sup>All these worked one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He willed.” Other and manifold graces, of course, there were in these holy men, and without them these graces had not obtained their excellence or had been blighted. Thus in Joseph there was filial and brotherly affection; in Daniel, love and watchful prayer for His people; in Moses, sympathy with the people of God, and rejection of a throne and of the

<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 7.<sup>o</sup> Ib. xii. 11.



world for their sake. Still these were in their different proportions ; St. John and Moses, and St. Peter and St. Paul, were full of zeal, but it showed itself in a different way, and what in the one was a chief grace, was in the other subordinate; God showing His power thus variously, that none might despise the other, because he had not his excellence; and showing forth in each thus conspicuously some one grace, that in each some attribute of God might be the more glorified, and by all an example of the whole company of Christian graces be exhibited as in a high degree realized in men of like nature with ourselves.

That then which was most conspicuously realized in St. Barnabas was Christian kindness. We first hear of him as the “son of consolation,” and that (whatever other meanings it may have had) in connection with his parting with “lands and houses for the kingdom of Heaven’s sake.” Next, when Saul essayed to join himself to the disciples at Jerusalem, and they were all “<sup>p</sup>afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple,” it is Barnabas (again the “son of consolation”) who reassures them, and obtains for St. Paul the communion of his brethren: when others shrank from the persecutor, Barnabas informed himself that he was indeed a disciple of Him Whom before he blasphemed. And in this world what rarer act of charity than—not to be indifferent to sin, because men love it, but—to take pains to ascertain that one who has deeply sinned is a true penitent, and so to bring back to the brethren one whom even they shrink from? “<sup>q</sup>Charity think-

<sup>p</sup> Acts ix. 26, 27.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

eth no evil." Again, when men of Cyprus and Cyrene had, through the hand of the Lord with them, "brought many at Antioch to turn to the Lord," Barnabas was sent down by the Apostles; and then follows that praise of Scripture just spoken of. "When he came, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted them all with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord, for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and" (by his coming) "much people was added unto the Lord." "Charity rejoiceth in the truth." "Charity envieth not, is not puffed up." He rejoiced at this which was done, although done by men inferior to himself; he took the lower place, and as the "son of consolation" built up and exhorted those whom he had not himself won to the Gospel. Nor would he remain chief among them, but departed straightway to Tarsus to seek Saul, by whose brighter light his own glory was to be eclipsed. "Charity seeketh not her own." Next, when the Gospel was to be carried beyond its then confines into the centre of the heathen, Asia Minor, he is chosen by the Holy Ghost Himself, and separated with St. Paul "to the work." Here also, although the elder in the faith, he gives the first place to Paul the younger; he who had recently been a protector of St. Paul, and presented him to the brethren, now subjected himself to him whose advocate and patron he had lately been. Although chosen and placed first by God, "separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work," he takes the lowest place. Majestic in appearance, so that the poor heathen thought him their chief god

† Acts xi. 23, 24.

• Ib. xiii. 2:

himself, the king of their gods, their Jupiter, he gave place to him "who was in bodily presence weak," so that St. Paul was the chief speaker. When "the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, If ye have any word of exhortation to the people, say on, Then *Paul* stood up." "Charity vaunteth not itself." Once only in life doth Holy Scripture speak of a sharp contention, as once only did Moses "speak unadvisedly with his lips;" the one lost Canaan, the other was severed for ever from the companion of his labours, whom he had brought to the Apostles, with whom he had been "separated to the work." So heavily doth God chastise the errors of His distinguished servants. One sharp contention severed for ever, by God's appointment, those who yet remained one in mind. Yet even here St. Paul and Barnabas each acted according to their several graces, wrong only in this, that their "contention was sharp." St. Paul, the austere maintainer of a holy discipline, urged not to take him who had departed from them in peril; St. Barnabas, as he had before explored the truth of St. Paul, so doubtless now also of his sister's son, and would again take the untried but penitent companion. And so, God overruling, each took his several province, and the Gospel was the more spread; and the milder Apostle was sent to the weaker inhabitants of Cyprus, the sterner and more energetic to the wilder heathen. Yet Mark was not advanced to that office of visiting the Churches, from which he before shrunk. The charitable severity of St. Paul impressed on St. Mark the heinousness of his fault, and prepared him, by God's grace, to be

<sup>t</sup> Ps. cvi. 33.

<sup>u</sup> Acts xv. 39.

stern with himself, the founder of a strict and courageous Church, and for his crown of martyrdom; the tender kindness of St. Barnabas saved him from being abandoned, and from being "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow," and fainting at the outset. "Charity suffereth long and is kind." Yet, though thus mild, he had the firmness so often separated from mildness, so that even when St. Peter yielded unduly to the Jewish Christians, St. Paul thought it strange that "*even* Barnabas should be carried, hurried, away." It was but for a short time, it would seem, and then, borne or hurried away by the dignity perhaps of St. Peter. There are yet two more incidents noticed of St. Barnabas. The one, that when a work of charity to the poor saints of Jerusalem was prepared by those of Antioch, Barnabas was chosen to bear it, still indicating his mercifulness. The other illustrates his self-denial. The text relates how he sold his hereditary possessions, and left his lands for the Gospel's sake; and afterwards he lived, not even on any common stock; he availed himself not of his privilege to "live of the Gospel," as "preaching the Gospel," but, like St. Paul, "his own hands ministered to his necessities." "Have I only and Barnabas," asks St. Paul, as if it were something almost peculiar to them, "I only and Barnabas, have we not power to forbear working?"

Such then, was the eminent saint whom our Church would this day call to our minds, whom Jesus Christ chose, out of the order, as it were, to be, with St. Paul, the Apostle of us Gentiles; in one thing conspicuous. Of one grace he was *the* human



exemplar among his brethren, but throughout in harmony, in nothing jarring, or resisting the pervading influence of that Holy Spirit, Which filled him wholly, and attuned every thought in its whole compass to the blissful sympathies of heaven. Firm and self-denying, yet compassionate on the infirm ; meek and gentle, yet “delivering over his life unto death” (as the Apostle bare him witness<sup>w</sup>,) for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ ; charitable, so as to command Apostolic respect, and bring down the praise of God, at once delivering over all he had, not claiming even the distribution of it, seeking neither power nor influence, but taking contentedly the lower place, and through the long succession of years maintaining himself with an unpretending simplicity ; with outward advantages of person and of the learning of the priestly tribe, yet in godly sincerity setting others higher than himself ; yea he had, concentrated in himself, all those natural advantages which men boast of, that outward appearance which once deceived even the eye of Samuel, wealth, learning, winning character, high expectations, noble descent, (i. e., descent from that tribe whose privilege of being near the Lord the great of the world then thought higher than their own ;) yet all, descent, popularity, wealth, learning, reputation, outward show, he held as nothing. He followed implicitly our Lord’s command, “<sup>x</sup> Whosoever shall be great among you shall be your minister ;” he consecrated or gave up all to God, and so received all back from God, the praise of God which he sought, and the praise of men which he sought not ; and humbling

<sup>w</sup> Acts xv. 26.<sup>x</sup> S. Matt. xx. 26.

himself he was exalted, and how much more shall he be exalted at the Great Day !

Say I this as if I would herein praise St. Barnabas? Oh no! What have we to do with praising Saints and Martyrs of Apostolic days, who, at our best estate, are so unlike them? What have we to do with praising, as from ourselves, those whose praise God hath sealed? Our safest praise is (as our Church this day doth for us) reverently to repeat what Scripture saith of them. Our safest praise, said I? No, for ourselves, our safest praise were to awake, to arouse ourselves, to be following his steps, to praise him by actions conformable to his, to realize his life again on earth, to be in our measure St. Barnabas'. So shall his praise, and the praise of God in him, be the more multiplied, when many, like him, shall add to their faith manly courage, and to manly courage knowledge, and to knowledge self-restraint, and to self-restraint enduringness, and to enduringness godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity, and so be—what? perfect saints? no—but “<sup>y</sup> neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;” when many, like him, shall hear their Saviour’s voice, “<sup>z</sup> Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross, and follow Me.”

It is indeed part of natural piety to keep in grateful remembrance these our benefactors, our fathers in Christ, the founders of our Church, the foundation whereon, in Christ Jesus, we are built up. We

<sup>y</sup> 2 S. Pet. i. 8.

<sup>z</sup> S. Mark x. 21.

keep the birth-day of our kings, and rightly, since through them we may “<sup>a</sup>lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.” We keep the anniversaries of our victories, (would we kept them as the memory of God’s deliverances,) where Christian blood has been by Christians shed, and we think that the memory thereof will increase the patriotism and courage of our citizens. And would not our Christian courage in fighting our good fight, would not our love for our heavenly country be more stirred up within us, if we kept the birth-days of our heaven-born warriors (the days on which by the death of Martyrdom they were born to endless glory;) if we meditated thereon, what they had been, what they are, what they shall be, saints on earth, with their Lord in Paradise, with “white robes,” as the emblems of their acceptance in Heaven, to reign with Him for ever? Yet they were also men like ourselves, with the same feelings, the same weakness of the flesh, though with mightier temptations. It was not their strength, but their weakness, and their Lord’s “strength, made perfect in their weakness,” which triumphed over their weakness and Satan’s strength. “Is the Lord’s arm shortened at all that it cannot redeem, or hath He no power to deliver<sup>b</sup>?” God Himself will answer, “Behold the Lord’s hand is *not* shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear<sup>c</sup>.” His gifts were not confined to those His first children; His heritage is not wasted by passing through

<sup>a</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 2.<sup>b</sup> Isa. l. 2.<sup>c</sup> Ib. lix. 1, 2.

so many hands unto us ; nor is it so narrow, that it should not suffice when diffused through so many nations and languages. Rather it multiplies, as the loaves which He blessed, so that it should satisfy and well fill all who wish to partake of it. His kingdom is not like earthly kingdoms, mighty at first, but gradually to decay ; it is subject to no laws of human changeableness, of rise, and strength, and decay ; it is subject to no law but only His, that “<sup>d</sup> they who seek the Lord shall renew their strength, shall mount up with wings as eagles, shall run (their blessed race) and not be weary, shall walk (in His ways) and not be faint.” It is subject to no law but “that them who honour God, He will honour ; and they that despise Him shall be lightly esteemed<sup>e</sup>.”

And so now these our holy days might well be turned into mourning, because we are, as it were, in captivity, and the “glory” of the Ancient Church is “departed,” and we “see not” the “sign” of God’s presence, “neither is there any prophet any more.” Yet it shall not be always thus. We believe that God’s “Spirit will” yet “be poured from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field,” and His “weary inheritance” shall again “be refreshed,” and His glory shall more visibly appear ; yea, we daily pray that this “His kingdom” may “come” in power. Nay, already there seemeth as it were the shaking of the dry bones, whereof the prophet spoke, “<sup>a</sup> a noise, and lo ! a shaking, and the bones coming together, bone to his bone,” and “the sinews and the flesh” shall yet “come upon them,

<sup>d</sup> Isa. xl. 31.<sup>e</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 30.<sup>f</sup> Ezek. xxxvii.



and the skin cover them from above," and "the breath shall come into them," and the universal Church, which now is in comparison but as a valley of dry bones, shall "live and stand up" again "upon her feet, a very great army." Signs of these times there already appear to be. "The earth is shaken and the inhabitants thereof;" and so men look more to the Rock of Ages, which moveth not. Slowly indeed do we seem to turn, yet motion is begun. Bone seemeth to be coming to his bone, however far the time may be ere the full living Spirit of our God dwell in them. This period, these our festival-days, which from the very times immediately after the Apostles the universal Church has kept, by prayers, by thanksgivings and joy for the blessed departed, by receiving the Holy Communion (as is this day again offered to you), may, if duly kept, hasten; if kept, as they kept them, not by listlessly listening to their histories, but by imitating their deeds. The festivals which we keep in memory of our Lord, we keep chiefly in memory of His great loving-kindness towards us. The festivals of these our fellow-servants we keep to remind us, how men have served our Master, how men may again serve Him, that we may be these men. I mean not that most of us should look for such high office. It requires probably too steady a faithfulness from the beginning to be vouchsafed to such as us. We are too much entangled with the customs and self-indulgent usages and vain unrealities of the world, and have not faith enough to break through them. Yet if we cannot be Barnabas', we may at least sit at the feet of Barnabas, and learn of him as he did of his Divine Master, and he and

the holy angels will be glad at our return ; gladder yet, if we could be partners of his glories.

And if not in us, yet in our children, God may yet raise up Barnabas', if we set before them, not the vain examples of the fleeting world around them, not to do as do others, but to live with Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs, to emulate their doings, to seek their crown. The way thereto lies through humility. By humbling themselves Apostles became exalted, and we, if we meditate on what was realized in them, what in ourselves, may through that humiliation be the readier to resemble them.

And now, in what way I could attain unto, the example of one eminent saint of that goodly company has been set before you ; "whose faith follow, knowing the end of his conversation," reward from his Saviour's hands in eternal glory. Imitate or labour to imitate it in its completeness ; for so only can we attain to any portion of it, as it ought to be. Charity without zeal is but a veil of indifference ; almsgiving, without self-denial and benevolence, feeds but self-satisfaction and pride ; sensitiveness to suffering, without sacrifice to relieve it, is but hypocrisy and selfishness. And this inconsistency but disgraces in the eyes of the world the very virtues which we should wish to honour, and "gives occasion to the enemies of our God to blaspheme." Shall we wait then till we are consistent ? So should we never begin ; for it is amid many inconsistencies that we learn to be consistent. But only we should begin evenly, not be very zealous for what we think man's well-being, and forget God ; or (which is the rarer

error) be zealous for God, and forget man. For as he only loveth God who loveth his brother, so he only can love his brother who loves God. Yet blended together, although each at first imperfect, each grace will impart to the other of its light and warmth, until, while one grace be eminent, God's "Spirit shall be shed abroad through" the whole "heart," and pervade the whole man, yea, and fill it wholly.

And wherewith did St. Barnabas begin? The text tells us, with ardent, self-denying charity. He "h<sup>h</sup>having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet." My Brethren, let me speak plainly. We in these latter days have been much more anxious to prove that the example of primitive times is not binding and imperative, than to look whether it be not an example and a privilege held out to those who *can* follow it. Granted that our Lord does put no such yoke upon us, that He leaves us to a free and spontaneous service, that "p<sup>p</sup> while the land remains, is it not our own? and after it is sold, is it not in our own power?" Is this all? Followeth it, because a thing *need* not be done, because God's wrath comes not upon us for not doing it, that therefore there is no privilege in doing it, no blessing annexed, no "good pleasure of our God" upon those who do so? *Must* we do all we *may* do? Granted that many of us are lawfully hindered, are all? Can no *one* Christian be found to do that in their lifetime, which at their deaths many still do, when they need it not, give their substance unto God? How is it that when in these latter times hundreds of thousands "parted with their

<sup>h</sup> Acts v. 4.

lands," to recover from the heathen the sepulchre of their Lord, where He once had lain, none now do this for His living temple, wherein He *now* dwelleth, even those who have been baptized into His Name, but who are being torn away by Satan? How is it that men, even in this land, sold their lands to build these goodly houses to our God, and now we build goodly houses for ourselves, and let the living temple of God lie waste? If all cannot be parted with lawfully, why not some? Why not some, not merely of our superfluities, year by year, but (what only requires faith) of our substance, so that we may be poorer in the sight of men, richer in the sight of God? How is it that we hear so much of the desirableness of "laying field to field, till there be no space," of adding fortune to fortune, of increasing riches, and we hear scarcely at all of the blessing of diminishing riches, parting with the world's perishable goods, of parting with fields or lands, and giving the produce to God's treasury, of lending to God, of clothing Christ? And yet who dares claim this to himself? To whom almost would not the words seem too high to use? And rightly! For were we to claim such high titles as "lending to the Lord" to our petty pittances, it were hypocrisy as well as niggardliness. For what then are we keeping it? For pomp, for ostentation, for luxury, for things which perish in the using, for vanities, which at our Baptism we renounced, and which are destroying or enervating and emptying body and soul, emptying it of the Holy Ghost, whereof St. Barnabas was full,—*"for our own hurt,"* as Scripture saith, both as a nation and as individuals.



Granted again that those of us to whom God has entrusted more of this world's goods than to others, may also, in moderation, lawfully enjoy them; that our frames often need more comforts than our poorer and hardier brethren; that the tastes which have been cultivated in us, may (in discretion) be lawfully gratified; that something is to be allowed even to the habits of society in which our lot is cast, and with whom and upon whom we are to act—followeth it, that because something is to be allowed, therefore every thing is? Because we may have some indulgences above others, therefore may we be self-indulgent? Because we may have comforts, may we therefore be luxurious? Because some things are permitted us, therefore are we to forego nothing? Because we retain things decent, i. e., becoming in our station, are we therefore to fall in with our times, in which each rank has been copying that above it and deepening its luxuries? Because we may, without sin, expend on self, is it therefore not more blessed to deny self, and build temples to our God, or give to Christ in His poor? Even might we safely go on thus (and who remembering the “woe upon those who are rich!” can witness the habits of our upper and middling classes without misgiving and anxiety?) yet is there no brighter crown to be gained? Would there be no blessing, if our women broke off the ornaments (which it is at least safer<sup>i</sup> for Christian women not to wear) as the Jewish women of old<sup>k</sup>, for the service of their God? Is there no blessing on luxuries abandoned, establishments diminished, show and display laid aside, equi-

<sup>i</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 9.<sup>k</sup> Ex. xxxviii. 8.

pages dropped, superfluous plate cast into the treasury of God, the rich (where it might be) walking on foot here, that they may walk in glory in the streets of the city which are of pure gold? Would there be no blessing on us all in abridging our luxuries, comforts, ease, the things "coveted by the flesh, the eye, and the pride of life," that we might give to those who need? Is it much for us to forego to this end such things as these, when to this end a Saint, an Apostle, the called of Christ, separated by the Holy Ghost, who shall hereafter "sit on" one of the "twelve thrones," worked with his own hands?

Alas, my Brethren, it is sickening to men like yourselves, who live in simpler abodes, to see again, after some absence, the pomps and vanities which we have all renounced, enthroned in the edifices and streets and shops of this vast city, and so (one knows too well) in the hearts of so many of God's people! What then must it be to the All-Holy?

Could we but once come to put the question to ourselves, "Is it then good for me to keep this? Need I it? or my children after me? May it not be spared? Might I not set aside this or that superfluity?" Could we but once think it a blessing that we *might* part with our wealth, instead of being a blessing that we *might* accumulate it or spend it upon the lust of our eyes, God, if we sought wisdom of Him, would guide us onward. He would show us the way we should walk in, if we lifted up our eyes from this fleeting world, and fixed them on His Throne of Grace. So should we have more like St. Barnabas, more "<sup>1</sup> laying up for themselves a good

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 19.

foundation, that they might obtain eternal life." But now, because we take the maxims of the world as our guide, instead of the Word of God, while we boast ourselves of our adherence to Scripture, the words of Scripture are like the charms in the deaf adder's ear; we read them, hear them, boast of them, every thing but understand them and do them. God sets forth examples, and none follow them; He invites, and none accept. He saith, "<sup>m</sup>by mercy and truth iniquities are purged away," and we would have easier terms, and so keep our money and our sins. He saith, "<sup>n</sup>Whoso hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto *Me*, and what he layeth out I will repay him;" and we think it no privilege that God would make Himself our debtor. He saith, "<sup>o</sup>Whoso soweth plenteously, shall reap plenteously, and who-so soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly," and we care not for the barren harvest, the barren harvest of everlasting glory, so we may be spared and sparing in our seed-time. He saith, "God loveth a cheerful giver," and men reject the love of God, and the brightness of His Fatherly countenance, so that, while they live, they may "<sup>p</sup>do well unto themselves, and count themselves happy men."

The heart sickens, while it goes over such miserable faithlessness, such trust in the uncertainty of riches, and such mistrust of God, our abiding good. It faints, more and more, as it sees the tens of thousands gathered together, "<sup>q</sup>walking in a vain show, heaping up riches," though "not knowing who shall gather them," or spending them on vanities. And

<sup>m</sup> Prov. xvi. 6.<sup>n</sup> Ib. xix. 17.<sup>o</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7.<sup>p</sup> Ps. xlix. 18.<sup>q</sup> Ps. xxxix. 6.

now it seems as if God were again warning us<sup>r</sup> more loudly of their uncertainty. A heavy gloom, it is said, hangs every where over the prospects of many of our wealthiest; men's hearts fail them for fear; many are looking fearfully to that which is coming upon them; looking hither and thither whether there be any to save, whether there be any hope, or the sand-built house must fall. Whether the clouds will burst, and the crash come, we know not. But this we know, that whether it will or no, will depend, not on man's foresight or contrivances, or the stability of houses, but upon the Providence of the living God. If we continue to idolize wealth, God, if He take not His mercy from us, will take away our wealth, not to give it back to us, as if we had given it to Him, but in order to restore us to ourselves. So has He done with us formerly; so did He, not very many years past, with many among us, as a warning to us, not to tempt Him further; and woe to that nation which neglects His warnings! Our vessel is over-laden, and the storm is upon us; it were wise to lighten it for the present danger; how much more, when God will, in addition, mercifully accept what even in our fear we cast over, and keep it for us, and give it back to us, in "the true riches." Man says, "heap up," that you may be rich; God, "scatter," and I will "increase" your riches<sup>s</sup>.

<sup>r</sup> Preached in London during the commercial anxieties of 1837; the immediate alarm was removed; the warning is retained, since the history of all other luxurious commercial nations shows, how precarious our dizzy prosperity is, that the giddier its height, the more it needs God's arm to hold it up, the more sudden and hopeless (unless we humble ourselves) will probably be its fall.

<sup>s</sup> Prov. xi. 24.



But whatever be now, we must soon be laid “ashes to ashes, and dust to dust,” and then whose shall these things be? Oh may God fix all our hearts on that day, and open our eyes to behold our Saviour returning as our Judge, to “take account of our stewardship!” Think on this awful hour; picture it to yourselves; this world burning up, heaven and hell before you, and, more than all, your very Saviour’s countenance falling upon you, all your sins of your whole lives in review before you; nothing between you and your Judge, every thing open to His eye, and His eye on thee; think what it will then be to thee to hear the gracious words, “‘Forasmuch as thou hast done it to one of the least of these My brethren, thou hast done it unto Me;” think what it will be, by the mammon of unrighteousness to make thy Judge thy Friend; and do as thou then wouldest wish thou hadst done. And ye, who are now about to approach once more to the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ our Saviour, to meet Him again face to face, and that “you may dwell in Him, and He in you,” you have often, I doubt not, felt distressed that (however it arose) what you offered at this most awful moment, bore so small a proportion to your other charities, that what you offered at God’s Altar could not be called even an earnest of your debt to Him. To-day, the day of the Apostle of Charity, your minister will give to all those who, with their souls and bodies and the memorials of their Saviour’s suffering, purpose to offer on His Altar their alms, an opportunity of glorifying greatly His Holy Name. The alms

this day offered are to aid in the plan lately formed by our Bishops for providing those <sup>u</sup> who shall take care for the souls of your hitherto neglected brethren. It is to impart to them the blessing which you have richly. Not to interfere with your other gifts to this same purpose, (for all which you can give and more is needed,) but, as it were, an earnest that you wish to follow the example which God has by His Church this day set before you, to have some portion of the praise and of the crown of Barnabas.

You are approaching in a mysterious manner to your Redeemer and Intercessor. He will be sacramentally present, He will sacramentally impart Himself. What you give, you give in His Presence to His very Self; and He in Heaven, where He sitteth in the glory of the Father, will present with your repentance, your love, and your faith, these fruits of your faith to His Father, bedewed with His own Blood. He delegates to you the high office of enabling those whom He has appointed, to hire fresh labourers into His vineyard, to gather His own scattered sheep, for whom He laid down His life. Yea, what you offer is (sanctified by that His Blood) the price of souls. May He so enlarge our narrowed hearts in love for His members, that He may Himself dwell more largely in the hearts, which by love He hath opened!

<sup>u</sup> The Additional Curates' Fund, then just formed.

## SERMON XVII.

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ST. JAMES.—OBEYING CALLS.

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St. Matt. iv. 21.

*“And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him.”*

It was very early the custom of the Church to meet together on these holy-days, the birth-days of our Martyrs. It was a blessed custom; for they met to acknowledge the great mercies which through them God had vouchsafed to us. They keep in grateful memory those, through whom these mercies had been vouchsafed. They keep the communion with the Saints departed, who, being in the Lord, are one body with us. So joining on the Church visible with the Church invisible, things seen with things unseen, God's present mercies with the past, us the children with our fathers in Christ, and by laying to heart the deeds of our fathers, kindling those yet in the flesh to follow their steps, as they did those of their and our Master and Saviour, to go on more stedfastly in their path, seeing how glorious its end, how safely God conducted them along it. Thus

saith St. Paul, “<sup>a</sup>Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” In the case of the blessed Apostle, for whom we are this day met to praise God, and to bear him in grateful recollection, there could be no doubt that this was his birth-day to Paradise; that on this day nearly <sup>b</sup> eighteen hundred years ago, “<sup>c</sup>Herod killed James the brother of John, with the sword.” For these birth-days of the Martyrs were kept so early and so generally, that of one who was slain in Jerusalem, at the very beginning of the Gospel, it could hardly be but that the very day should be remembered, whereon he was so born to Heaven. And had they not reason to recollect them? Twelve only were selected by our Lord out of the world, on which foundation to build His Church; twelve only, to be witnessess to Him unto the uttermost parts of the earth, witnesses of His Resurrection; twelve only, in whose souls He poured the hidden treasure of His teaching, which the rude world were not fitted to receive, and which they, as occasion offered, having “<sup>d</sup>heard in the ear, were to publish on the house-top;” twelve only, or rather the eleven, to whom during those mysterious forty days “<sup>e</sup>He spake of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;” whom He bade to “<sup>f</sup>go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you alway, unto the end of the world.” And how should we not reverence them? All the blessings of the Gospel came

<sup>a</sup> Heb. xiii. 7.<sup>b</sup> Written in 1837.<sup>c</sup> Acts xii. 2.<sup>d</sup> S. Matt. x. 27.<sup>e</sup> Acts i. 3.<sup>f</sup> S. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.



to us through them. Through them were those brought to the faith who brought our fathers to the faith. Without them we had been Heathen still, "without God in the world," or hope of Heaven, given up to things cruel, and abominable, and bloody, such as our fathers served. It *might* have pleased Him to have given us every thing directly through His Son; and one might go on, just as well, to say that it might have pleased Him to have given them to us through His Son, without His "becoming flesh, and dwelling among us," to have redeemed us without a redemption. But He Who gave us His Son, chose also these twelve out of the world, through whom to convey to us the mercies which He designed for us. He chose to carry on to us, through men like ourselves, the blessings which He gave to us in "His Son, made after the likeness of our sinful flesh;" and as "in the regeneration," or renewal of all things at the end of all, "when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, they also (He tells them) shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel<sup>g</sup>," so did He join them to Him in the present work of the regeneration of the world. Jesus, God-Man, Himself, is the chief corner stone, and in Him the whole building is fitly joined together. Yet St. Paul saith, He built us "<sup>h</sup>on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets," so "to grow unto an holy temple in the Lord." Them He made as "pillars" of His Church<sup>i</sup>: their names, "<sup>k</sup> the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb," He placed "in the twelve foundations of the

<sup>g</sup> Matt. xix. 18.<sup>h</sup> Eph. ii. 20, 21.<sup>i</sup> Gal. ii. 9.<sup>k</sup> Rev. xxi. 14.

wall" of the Holy City, "the Holy Jerusalem, that great city which descended out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God," even the Church of God. The Lamb "only" is the Light of the city, the Apostles are set as twelve gates, through which men are to enter into it<sup>1</sup>. They then, as we, fall down before the throne of the Lamb, and give glory to God Who gave such power and excellence to man. They, as we, acknowledge it to have been His gift. We fall not down before these our fellow-servants, but we ought to bear in grateful remembrance what God has through them wrought for us, and them through whom He wrought it. We should not envy them the high post which they have in the Redeemer's kingdom, or try to bring them down to a level with ourselves, or doubt of or forget their excellency, but rather cherish it, store it up, thank God for it, thank and praise and magnify His glorious Name for the graces and virtues He has wrought in His saints, and by them bestowed upon His Church, that so we too may desire to be like them in whom God hath wrought thus mightily.

Such then is the first and common object of these holy-days, to remember and be joined in communion with those Saints of God, whom He chose to be the channels of His goodness to the world, and to thank God for them. It is well, thus to be cast back into times long past, even the beginnings of the Gospel, and so, thankfully to remember not only the mercies which God has wrought for our own souls, but all that chain of mercies and Providences whereby He has established and "prepared the Ark" of Christ's

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi. 10. &c.

Church, wherein we have found refuge. It were like the very beasts who perish, so to have our minds bent upon things present, as to have no thought or feelings for those through whom, in ages long past, God vouchsafed these mercies to us; as if the Christian Church were a thing of time and not of eternity; and we, who now live, were not still "built upon" that "foundation of Apostles and Prophets" whereof St. Paul speaks, and through them on Christ; as if time could efface or lessen the loving-kindness of God! Rather, as the circle spreads on more largely, taking in within it more nations and peoples and languages, we should the more thank God, and the more wonder at and adore His might, Who imparted such strength to its first weak beginnings. The longer it has endured, and the greater the extent, the greater also His glory in them, on whom He founded it.

Besides this object, however, of praise and thanksgiving for the whole twelve, God would, by each, teach us some one grace, most clearly shown in him, or He placed him in some post, whereby he gives his own special instruction. He, for whom we have this day met to praise God, was the first Martyr of the Apostles; the first inroad made into their number; the first who sealed with his blood the witness which they all bore. St. Stephen had been stoned by the Jews; and for him, as, of all, His first martyr, we yearly thank God. Of His Apostles, St. James was the first; the first-fruits of Heathen enmity; the first selected to follow his Master's steps, to die his Master's death, to water by his blood his Master's vineyard. What, had his faith

failed in that hour of bloody trial? We know that it did not; we would not do such dishonour to St. James, as to think it could: it is shocking even to put the case. But had he been some other man? As among the twelve there was the traitor, so had there been one who feared to die for his Master's sake, what a triumph had this been to Satan! what a blow to the infant Church! what an injury even now to us! Great reason then have we, even in this way, on this day to thank God for the courage with which He endued him "to be faithful unto" the Martyr's "death."

The history of St. James is short. Little is told of him, only some few striking points, not to praise him, but for our instruction. His mother we find one of the four named, who stood by the Cross, "the mother of Zebedee's children, with Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses<sup>m</sup>;" and so we may well think that she was one of those who "looked for the consolation of Israel," and had formed in her sons that mind which should acknowledge Him when He came. He and his brother, St. John, were fishermen<sup>n</sup>; an employment which gives to faithful hearts much time for musing upon God; and doubtless alone by night, upon Bethsaida's lake, under the starry heaven, and musing upon Him "Who had ordained the stars," they thought full often on Him Whom God had "set over the works of His hands;" Who should "restore to Israel" the glories which those waters had once witnessed, and

<sup>m</sup> S. Matt. xxvii. 56.

<sup>n</sup> Such were all the inhabitants of Sark, for whom the Sermon was written.



be Himself "the glory of His people Israel." He came; and, as above related, called the two brethren, "and they left their father and all that they had, and followed Him." Thenceforth, as amongst the earliest called, they were among the first of His Apostles. Both were of an earnest, zealous, fiery temper, whence He called them Boanerges, i. e., sons of thunder; sincere and zealous for their Master's honour, whence, without knowing the spirit *they* were of, they would imitate, of themselves, what Elias by Divine command had done. Confiding that, for the love they bore to their Master, they could in all things follow Him, and be made like to Him, they pledged themselves to "° drink of the cup of which He drank, and be baptized with the Baptism wherewith He was baptized;" and He, Who saw their sincerity, accepted their promise, and held them bound to Him and with Him. They, with St. Peter, were the only witnesses of some of the chief things in the life of our Lord: they only were present at the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead: they only saw the glories of the Transfiguration, when the Incarnate Divinity shone through the veil of flesh, and gave a glimpse of those glories which they should see hereafter, and which now they more fully behold. To them who had seen His glory, He spake also of His coming humiliation; to them only with St. Andrew, of His coming to destroy Jerusalem, and of His second coming to Judgement. They only, "Peter" and these "two sons of Zebedee," were admitted to witness His soul "sorrowful and very heavy;" to them only He con-

descended to look for sympathy, and spake the gracious, confiding words, “<sup>p</sup> My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me.” Further of St. James we hear nothing, but that one of the appearances after the Resurrection was to him and six other of the Apostles, as they for the time returned to their fishing on the lake of Galilee. Then we hear again only of his death, wherein his Lord’s promise to him was fulfilled, and he drank of the cup of his Lord, and was baptized with His Baptism of blood: eminent even in his death, in that when “<sup>a</sup> Herod took in hand to vex certain of the Church,” “he slew James the brother of John with the sword,” and then “proceeded to take Peter also;” slaying, it seems, St. James the Greater, as he is called, as being one chief among the Apostles.

Such and so little does even the Church here below know of the saints of God! For eleven years from the Ascension of our Lord did he labour abundantly, and his zealous spirit, now chastened and subdued by the Holy Spirit Which dwelt in him, was foremost doubtless in the task assigned to the twelve: yet, of all, we are told only of his death, and that, in the few words, “Herod slew him with the sword.” So little of the praise of men doth God often in this life assign to His chiefest servants, reserving the rest to be proclaimed before men and angels at the Great Day! He gives some few hints of their excellence, from which we may imagine what the daily, hourly warfare of these good soldiers of Christ was. He tells us no more, it may be, be-

<sup>p</sup> S. Matt. xxvi. 37, 38.

<sup>a</sup> Acts xii. 1.

cause it was not fitting that His praise, Whose alone they sought, should be forestalled; in part, perhaps, that they who come after might desire the more to have their praise hidden from the world, laid up with God. Again, who would not have thought that he, to whom his Master entrusted so great riches of knowledge, the chosen witness of His Agony and His Glory, would have been preserved by Him to bear witness of Him to the world? He to whom, with other two only, so much had been shown, taken to his rest after but eleven years of service, and the earthly weapon, which God had (so to speak,) formed so carefully, broken at the very first onset of the enemy! So little know we of what is wise in the sight of God, or in what way His ends, by life, or by death, are furthered! So rich is He in His treasures, calling out of the stones children to Abraham, and forming “<sup>r</sup>out of things that are not those that are,” and, again, bringing to nothing what seemed of most value, that men might see that He needeth not the might of man, and that “<sup>s</sup>whoso glorieth may glory in the Lord.” Again, the two brothers had together made the same promise, and asked for the same reward; yet one He calls away, one He makes to drink His cup, first of all the Apostles, the other He reserves to the very last. So “<sup>t</sup>unsearchable are His counsels, and His ways past finding out.”

There is, however, one other point in this history, which may come yet more home to us, for us to act on. It is that which our Church has in the Collect taught us to pray for, viz., how St. James instantly obeyed the first call of his Saviour; how he *at once*

<sup>r</sup> Rom. iv. 17.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. i. 31.

<sup>t</sup> Rom. xi. 33.

left his father and all that he had, and followed Christ. And this, it would seem, ere our Lord had wrought any miracles. He but bade the two brethren to follow Him, and they did so. However little is told us of those whom Jesus called, this is told of most of them. To "Simon Peter and Andrew his brother," who were fishing, "He said, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men<sup>u</sup>." James and John He called as they were "in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him<sup>v</sup>." "Jesus findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me; and he followed Him<sup>w</sup>;" and "findeth Nathanael," and bringeth him unto Him. "He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, Follow Me; and he arose and followed Him<sup>x</sup>." In the midst of their daily employments He came to them, bade them "do this, and they did it." So St. Peter says in the name of them all, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee<sup>y</sup>." So they were-fitted to become Angels or messengers of God in His work of mercy to man, because, like those blessed spirits, they were ready at once to "do His will." So again of other saints, St. Paul, when called by Christ from heaven, "asked, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and arose and did it. In like way, under the elder covenant, Abraham the father of the faithful, and the Judges, by whom He delivered His people, and Samuel, and David, and Elisha, and the prophets, God called them all, and they *at once* obeyed the call.

<sup>u</sup> S. Matt. iv. 19.      <sup>v</sup> Ib. xxi. 22.      <sup>w</sup> S. John i. 43, 45.

<sup>x</sup> S. Matt. ix. 9.

<sup>y</sup> Ib. xix. 27.



Then we should remark, that He called them *in many ways*. Jeremiah He separated from his mother's womb; Samuel He called in earliest childhood, David as a stripling, Abraham in advanced age, when seventy-five years old. So also Samuel He called gently in a vision by night; upon the Judges the Spirit of the Lord came down mightily, and their obedience was, that they went whither the Spirit drove them. "The hand of the Lord was on Elijah<sup>z</sup>," we are told, "and he girded up his loins;" on Elisha, the prophet but "cast his mantle," as "he was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth," "and he left the oxen and ran after Elijah." Jonathan, a king's son, He called to fight the Lord's battles against the uncircumcised by the words of an enemy<sup>a</sup>; David He called "from following the sheep great with young ones," and put His Spirit within him, so that his anger was kindled that "an uncircumcised Philistine should defy the armies of the living God." To Isaiah<sup>b</sup> Christ showed His glory in the temple, that hereafter he might speak of Him. Ezekiel the priest saw the Cherubim of the Holy of Holies, going, standing, lifted up from the earth, as the Spirit Who was within them went or stood or was lifted up, and thenceforward himself went or stood, and was lifted up above the things of this earth, as the "hand of the Lord was upon" him. Into Daniel's heart He put it, "<sup>c</sup>not to defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." To Cornelius He sent an

<sup>z</sup> 1 Kings xviii. 46.<sup>a</sup> 1 Sam. xiv. 6-12.<sup>b</sup> Is. vi. S. John xii. 41.<sup>c</sup> Dan. i, 8.

angel to cheer him; St. Paul He struck down to the earth.

Then again He called them for different ends, some to labour on perhaps in their own employments to His glory. Thus He "*called by name*<sup>d</sup> Bezaleel, and filled him with the Spirit of God;" "and Aholiab;" "and in the hearts of all the wise-hearted He had put wisdom," that they might "make all that He commanded Moses," the tabernacle and the ark, and every thing belonging to its service. Mighty men of valour He called, to do mightily against the enemies of the Lord. Others He called to abandon all, and take new duties which He gave them. Some He called for a whole life, some for one or a few works: some, as David, He raised; others, as Elisha, He made to give up the wealth of this world, that He might give them the true riches, the riches of the world to come.

Then, also, He called them "not knowing whither they went." Abraham He called to leave his country, and go to the land which He would show him, and yet "gave him not so much as to set his foot on," and made him wander up and down in it, or sent him into other countries, and promised him a seed which for a long time He gave him not, then bade him send away Ishmael whom He had seemed to give him, and gave him Isaac, when it seemed a thing for man impossible, then asked for him back again, and, for this crowning instance of his faith, gave him the crowning blessing. Who knows not whether this had not been too great a trial even for Abraham's faith, at the very first, since God kept it

<sup>d</sup> Ex. xxxv. 30; xxxvi. 2, &c.

to the last, and strengthened His servant, and then gave it him? The Apostles He called in ignorance; they knew not what He meant with them. If He added any promise, "I will make you fishers of men," they knew not what He would say. They had, as we know, many earthly notions and carnal feelings. St. James and St. John "knew not, what spirit" they "were of;" they sought also for earthly mastery, to be the first among their brethren; to have what, our Lord told them, was the portion of the Gentiles; to be great by having authority over their brethren, rather than by serving them. Still their hearts were right with God. They obeyed the first call, and He bore with their weaknesses for a while, and led them on, and gently chided them, until the veil at length fell from their eyes, and they saw that they were called to be, here, first only in service and in suffering, looking onward for the reward "which The Father hath prepared for them that love Him."

But others also have been called, and for a time obeyed the call, yet it went not well with them. Judas was called, yea, he left all for a while to follow Christ; yet after a while he made a gain of godliness, was a thief, and so "by transgression fell," until he betrayed Him, Whom he had left all to follow. Saul was called by lot, but afterwards half-obeyed only, i. e., disobeyed, and "the Lord said, Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and He hath rejected thee from being king;" his whole after-history is that of being half re-called, and still falling from one wickedness to another. Jeroboam

was called, and the kingdom was given him, but he took it in his own way, and it became sin to him and to Israel. Baasha and Jehu were called to execute judgement on Jeroboam and Ahab; they did it, and turned aside to their own ends, and what they had done at God's bidding became blood-guiltiness to them. The man of God, who was sent to utter God's judgements against Jeroboam and the idol-altar, (as was read on the last Lord's day,) was for one deed of disobedience slain by the lion. Demas ran for some time well, but afterwards "loved this present world," and went back. "Many," saith our Lord, "are called, but few chosen."

By all these, my brethren, God would cheer us on and warn us. We have all been called, called like Jeremiah, "from our mother's womb." We had the glory of being the sons of God put upon us, and were bidden to "be holy, as He Who called us is holy," faithful, as "He is faithful Who hath promised." We have been called, without so far having the power of putting aside the call, to our own ruin; we were *made* Christians. But since this first call, we have all of us again been called, or recalled. We have been called by God's own word, by the prayers which we have used, by the rest of the Lord's day, by the preaching of His ministers. Yea, upon some Scripture-text, which we well know, full often has He so cast His light, that it looked to us quite other than it did before, and flashed upon our souls; it stood out before us so plainly, as if it had been written in fire, or as when the man's hand wrote the words on the walls of the palace of the

f 2 Tim. iv. 10

g S. Matt. xx. 16.



king of Babylon ; it stood out of the page upon which it was written, as if the letters had been brought out for us to read. There is no end of God's dealings with men's souls. He deals with them, some in this manner and others in that manner, as He sees best for each. Some He draws gently onward all their lives long ; to others, who have not obeyed His first call, He showeth Himself in His terrible majesty, and frights them with the dread of hell. To some, "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, He openeth their ears, and sealeth up therein their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man<sup>h</sup>;" others their "i<sup>i</sup>reins have chastened in the night season," and so God hath "given" them "warning;" others He hath scared with nightly dreams of hell ; others He hath wakened by night to feel themselves alone with God, and see their own relation to Him. In all ways, by the wonders of this glorious world, by the beauties such as He here unfolds in it, by its uniform obedience to His laws, by its seeming joy in His light, by the rapidity of its growth, contrasted with their own slowness ; by the sight of the misery of vice, or the smile of babyish innocence ; by health and things going well, or more often by sickness or distress ; by the swelling of the heart with joy, or by the feeling of discontent and unsatisfactoriness in the midst of this world's goods ; or by taking from people that for which they long had toiled, and whereon they built, as they seemed well-nigh it ; by the untimely death of others, or by our own dangerous

<sup>h</sup> Job xxviii. 15—17.<sup>i</sup> Ps. xvi. 8.

sickness; by hope long deferred, or by taking away “<sup>k</sup>the desire of our eyes with a stroke;” by temporal losses, or sharp bodily pain, or searching mental agony; by (as it were) a chance rude word, or by His own saying within us, “<sup>l</sup>Wherefore spend ye money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” secretly or openly, by the hidden drawings of the heart, or as it were by a voice heard as plainly as any human voice, ever ringing in their ears, and crying to them, “away hence, lest thou be consumed;” in these and thousands of other ways doth God call to men, “<sup>m</sup>Turn ye to Me, even to Me, turn from your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin; turn and live ye.”

Nor have we any reason to suppose that these calls vouchsafed to us are so different in distinctness from those given to holy men of old, that we should have an excuse for neglecting them. We are told, “<sup>n</sup>The Lord said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house;” but we are not told in what way the Lord gave him this first call, or that it was to him more than an inward voice, as we also may oftentimes know that God speaks to us within. To Samuel, we know, the voice of God, though an outward call, sounded at first like Eli’s; to Jacob God made Himself known in a dream; to David, by some secret thrill of zeal, which gave him the consciousness that he was chosen to slay the Philistine. “<sup>o</sup>The Spirit of the Lord,” we are told, “came upon” the Judges,

<sup>k</sup> Ezek. xxiv. 16.<sup>l</sup> Isa. lv. 2.<sup>m</sup> Ezek. xviii. 30, 32.<sup>n</sup> Gen. xii. 1.<sup>o</sup> Judges iii. 10, &c.

and carried them on to what their hand found to do; nor does Scripture allude to any distinct intimation in words. “<sup>p</sup>The hand of the Lord was upon me,” says Ezekiel often, and under the pressure of that unseen hand he prophesied. So too in these days, persons have intimations of God’s will in dreams, or by a voice, or by secret stirrings of the spirit, or by a hidden impulse and consciousness that God has something for them to do. Certainly people have at times sadly mistaken the restlessness of their own minds, or the delusions of Satan, for the voice of God. There was a voice within them, and they, most miserably, knew not whose it was. But in the cases I am speaking of, there is no such difficulty. If we deem ourselves set upon some great thing, out of the order of God’s ordinary providence (as when one unlearned and uncommissioned thinks himself called to take upon himself the office of the ministry), we may well suspect ourselves; but if, as God certainly often vouchsafes, the call sets him upon breaking off some sin, “walking” more “humbly with his God,” doing more zealously the duties of his calling, then he may be assured, Who is calling him; he may know that it is the “voice” of God which he “<sup>q</sup>heareth behind him, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it;” he may know that it is His voice, as clearly as Abraham, or Elijah at Mount Horeb, or Samuel; nay our Lord seems to give it as a mark of His true sheep, “<sup>r</sup>The sheep hear His voice; and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out; and the sheep follow Him, *for* they know His voice.” If we obey not His still

<sup>p</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 22.<sup>q</sup> Isa. xxx. 21.<sup>r</sup> S. John x. 3, 4.

small voice thus speaking to us, we have no reason to think that we should have obeyed, had we heard His voice from heaven. Much less, had we been called to duties so hard as was Abraham. If we obey the voice, we are following “<sup>s</sup>in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham,” and are in the way to have distincter intimations of God’s will, and to be led to higher duties.

All of us, my brethren, have had many such calls as some of these I have spoken of. To all of us, probably while we were yet children, God hath so spoken through our parents, in our own souls, through His own word, and has bidden us “do this,” “cease to do that;” sometimes more specially, “leave off this one thing;” sometimes more largely, “break off all your evil ways, and serve God with “a whole heart.” To us also hath He in the one or the other way called, “Follow thou Me.” And, as we were faithful or not to our first calls, has been the happiness or misery of our life hitherto. Many we had, doubtless, which we mostly no longer remember; some or other more striking ones, when God spoke more loudly, and which, by our listening or no, have left more traces, most of us probably still bear in our memory. But all have had many of them, and all shall give account of all that they have had. Hence the example of these many Apostles may be such a blessing to us, in that in them we see how God rewardeth obedience to the first call. Others also were called; the rich young ruler was called, but “went away sorrowful,” and though “<sup>t</sup>Jesus loved him,” still lost the highest reward of

\* Rom. iv. 12.

† S. Mark x. 21, 22.



following Him : Scripture tells us no more of him, who went away at the first call ; we trust that he was saved, but he is held out to us only as a warning not to follow. The other who, when called, would go back and bid farewell to those of his household, and whose heart still lingered about his home, met with the rebuke, “<sup>u</sup>No one, putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” So much hangs upon our obeying with the Apostles, or disobeying our first call.

Then, after obeying the first call, be steadfast. Lot’s wife obeyed the first call, yet she looked back towards the guilty city, and she “became a pillar of salt.” “Remember,” says our Lord, “Lot’s wife.” The Apostles obeyed the first call, and so received other calls, and thus attained their glory.

Obey the call, whatever it be. Despise it not because it is little ; “Whoso despiseth little things,” it is said <sup>v</sup>, “shall fall by little and little ;” “<sup>w</sup>Whoso is faithful in little, is faithful also in much,” saith our Lord, “and he that is unfaithful in the least, is unfaithful also in much.” Obey the call, whatever it be ; if it be but a step, it is still a step in following Christ. Were it a great thing, Satan would scare thee by setting before thee its greatness, ; if a little thing, he would make thee follow thine own way, because it is little. Advise not with him ; if it be little, thank God for leading thee thus gently, and go onwards ; if great and hard, look to Him for strength, and through Him it will be easy. Some God “leads gently onwards,” as the shepherd “leads gently the ewes that are with young ;” others He

<sup>u</sup> S. Luke ix. 62.

<sup>v</sup> Ecclus. xix. 1.

<sup>w</sup> S. Luke xvi. 10.

brings back at once with a mighty vehemence. Only whatever He saith unto you, “do it.” Whoso neglects a thing which he suspects he ought to do, because it seems to him too small a thing, is deceiving himself; it is not too little, but too great for him, that he doth it not. “By small grains of sand,” saith an ancient Bishop, “may mighty ships be sunk. Drops of rain are small, yet they swell rivers,” which will overthrow that house which is “not founded upon the rock; and great is the fall thereof.” Small steps lead men often best to the tops of high hills.

Yet, alone, the least is too much for you; seek strength in prayer, in God’s ordinances, in the Holy Communion of the Saviour’s Body and Blood. When Elijah arose, and ate and drank at the angel’s bidding, and laid him down again, the angel of the Lord “<sup>x</sup>came again the second time and touched him, and said, Arise, eat, for the journey is too much for thee; and he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.” And ye too, though ye have not, like the blessed Apostle St. James, obeyed the first calling, yet he, though dead, still speaketh to you this day, as Eli to Samuel, “<sup>y</sup>If He call thee, thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” Repent you for having neglected any former calls, pray Him to call thee yet more loudly, and give thee strength to obey His call; do ye stedfastly purpose to obey it, and seek strength, where He has promised it, whenever thou mayest have it, and He will give it thee; and in the strength

<sup>x</sup> 1 Kings xix. 7.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 9.

of that "heavenly food," thou shalt go on, not now to Mount Horeb, but to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus, having obeyed the call, thou shalt be not "called" only, but "chosen," chosen to to be for ever with the Lord, and to thank Him for ever and ever, Who hath "called, justified, glorified" you with His own glory; and then, what tongue of men or angels can say how, in that heavenly kingdom, they who are saved will bless God that they were not disobedient to His call?

Now unto Him "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling," Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be ascribed all glory, thanksgiving and praise, now and for ever, Amen.

## SERMON XVIII.

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### THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD THE EARNEST OF THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORY.

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St. Matt. xvii. 1, 2.

*“ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them : and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.”*

SUCH was the one exception to the rest of our blessed Lord's life on earth. Elsewhere ever in the form of a servant, His Godhead veiled, His Majesty emptied : His whole life one humiliation and abasement. He was “<sup>a</sup>despised and rejected of men ;” blasphemed by the world, disbelieved by His brethren, misunderstood by His own disciples. He gathered to Him those whom “the Father drew,” by the unseen might of His Divinity. His Majesty was felt, not seen. “<sup>b</sup>Never man spake like this Man,” was the answer of the servants sent to take Him ; “<sup>c</sup>we have heard Him ourselves and know that This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world,” acknowledged

<sup>a</sup> Isa. liii. 3.

<sup>b</sup> S. John vii. 46.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. iv. 42.



the outcast Samaritans. But though discerned by the eye of humility and faith, by the lowly and poor and pure in heart, so was His Godhead hidden, that the world marvelled while it acknowledged. “<sup>d</sup>They marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth;” they “were astonished,” because He “<sup>e</sup>taught as One having authority, and not as the Scribes.” “<sup>f</sup>When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than this man doeth?” They who were not of His sheep, were offended alike at His words and His works. His miracles they said were wrought through Beelzebub; of His words they said, “<sup>g</sup>How hath this man letters, having never learned? and they were offended at Him.” They said He “blasphemed,” because He so lowly, Whose “father and mother they knew,” said, “I am the Son of God.” Even after they had felt His presence, and were stricken to the ground by His words, “<sup>h</sup>I am He,” they “took Him and bound Him.”

Such was the great contradiction of strength amid weakness, Infinite Wisdom within a form of earth, Infinite Power in our house of clay, Infinite Holiness in “the likeness of sinful flesh;” God taking man, the “Word became flesh.” It could not be but that the hidden holiness of the Godhead should flash forth, uttering itself in the Father’s works, the Father’s words; kindling the flame of faith, and hope, and love, in those whose hearts the Father had prepared; shining into the blinded eyes, that they might see; opening the sealed ear, that it might hear; melting the heart of stone, that it

<sup>d</sup> S. Luke iv. 22.<sup>e</sup> S. Matt. vii. 28, 29.<sup>f</sup> S. John vii. 31.<sup>g</sup> Ib. 15.<sup>h</sup> Ib. xviii. 6.

might love; but hidden still, putting forth secretly the healing virtue which went out of Him; drawing, by an invisible power, those natures which were capable of its attraction, yet so that to others it appeared "without form or comeliness;" as (if we may reverently so speak) the loadstone, which has such attractive force, that it imparts to other things the power to attract, is outwardly a dark shapeless mass, undistinguishable from other forms of earth.

So would He cure our pride, whereby we fell, through His lowliness: suffering, reproach, shame, want, weariness, all the degradations of men's sin (sin itself alone excepted), His portion in life; all gathered together, and heaped in one, by man's malice and Satan's rage, at His death. Amid all this humiliation, once only was the hidden glory permitted, in tempered Majesty, to shine forth; once only was He manifested to His disciples, "as He was," while hidden from the world.

This one showing-forth of His unseen glory was just before His Suffering; it prepared doubtless the three chosen witnesses to witness also His bitter agony and humiliation. All around relates to suffering. Just before our Lord promised this vision, He had rebuked St. Peter, who would not that He should suffer; He had warned His disciples that His kingdom was to be through suffering; that they who followed Him, must suffer. To "follow Him," was to "deny self, and take up His cross;" to "save life," was to "lose it;" to "lose it," was to "save it." Lest this should be too heavy tidings, our Lord promised that some of them should see the end of those sufferings; they should "not taste of

death, till they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Before they were called upon to "drink His cup, and be baptized with His baptism," they should see that, wherein this momentary affliction was to issue, the exceeding glory of their Lord, in which, having "suffered with Him," they were also "with Him to be glorified<sup>i</sup>." This was when He "was to be received up<sup>k</sup>;" shortly after, we are told, He "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem<sup>l</sup>." The only subject, whereon Moses and Elias spake with Him, was that, whereof "the law and the prophets" foretold, "His decease, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem<sup>m</sup>." "After six days," the Holy Gospel continues, "Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and taketh them to a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them." Apart from the world, nigh unto heaven, they saw the promised vision. For they saw Him, as we shall all see Him, in that glory wherein He shall return to judge us, in the human form which He had taken, yet shining with His own glory and the glory of His Father; shining "as the sun" of righteousness. They saw Moses and Elias, "the law and the prophets," bear witness to Him while present, and still more, by their vanishing away, leaving Jesus alone, of Whom Alone the Father's voice said, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, Hear Him;" and whereas Peter, in the bliss of that glorious sight, said, "It is good for us to be here," and longed to "build three tabernacles;" he was taught that Moses and Elias were but servants, his Lord alone the Son. He saw Him, for an

<sup>i</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 12.    <sup>k</sup> S. Luke ix. 51.    <sup>l</sup> Ibid.    <sup>m</sup> Ib. ver. 31.

earthly tabernacle, enshrined in the tabernacle of the cloud, as He shall again "come in the clouds of heaven." He was taught, that man's only good is to be where his Saviour is ; not to choose for himself, but to be with Him, in the mount apart, or in the agony of the garden, or following to the Cross, to be, if He so vouchsafe, in pain and suffering now, with the hope of "the glory which shall be revealed," whereof he had seen the outskirts.

And truly did this vision live with them ; and when our Lord showed to St. Peter that "he must shortly put off this tabernacle," and "stretch forth his hands and be girded" to the Cross, even as his Master was, that vision "when we were with Him in the holy mount," was still before his eyes, when he saw "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," and was "eye-witness of His Majesty<sup>n</sup>." He, too, after his Master's pattern, and by his Master's strength, "for the joy which was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the shame ;" yea, and shall sit with Him hereafter on His throne<sup>o</sup>.

But not for the Apostles' sake only, was the glory of the Lord thus revealed. In them the whole Church since saw it ; and to us, as to them, it is given, as a support of faith, a kindling of our hope. To us too it is a witness of our Lord's Divinity ; nay more, of His Divinity and Humanity together. It is to us a faint gleam (such as while in the flesh we can bear) of that ineffable mystery, how man can be taken into God, how God can dwell in man, and fill him with the Glory of the Father. We believe that our Lord was "God and man," "Very God and Very

<sup>n</sup> 2 S. Pet. i. 16—18.

<sup>o</sup> Rev. iii. 21.



man;" yet ancient heresies have shown, how difficult is that true faith, which can neither fall short of the belief in His Divinity, nor take offence at His Manhood; which can see Him to be man, but believe Him to be God; or believing Him to be God, can believe Him to have taken this, our frail, mortal substance, soul and body; to have been "perfect God and perfect man," to have had a human will ever subject to the Divine Will, and yet Himself to have that Will which He obeyed; to have had two natures, yet One Person; "God and man," yet "One Christ." And not only this, but it shows us how, now also that the indwelling Godhead deifies His human nature, yet is He Man still; penetrated with God, yet not absorbed into God; shining above the brightness of the sun, so that the beloved disciple fell as one dead<sup>p</sup>, yet withal known to His disciples, so that Peter called Him Master; how, dwelling in that unapproachable light, One God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, His Manhood is not lost; amid the ineffable glory of the eternal Godhead, He is Man still. His outward earthly form of suffering hindered not, that the Godhead, which shone through in His Transfiguration, should dwell therein in "all" Its "fulness bodily." That Body, now spiritual, life-giving, Deified, hinders not the closeness of His unspeakable union with the Father, but is in God.

Great is the comfort to us, that He, our High-Priest, our Intercessor, is thus glorified, is thus present with God, and is God. Well may we, in our miseries, "come boldly to the throne of grace," assured that He, Who in the Eternal Presence bears

the marks of His sufferings for us still, will remember us, whom by His most precious Blood He redeemed; that He, the well-beloved Son, can “<sup>a</sup>save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him.” Yet does this mystery, in a still more definite way, open to us the greatness of our future hopes; it gives a glimpse of that which we have no thought to conceive, “the good things” which God has, “in His boundless mercy, in store for those who love Him.”

It is, that our Lord took our nature upon Him, not only in it to render the obedience in which we had failed, to pay the debt we owed, to loose us from him whose “lawful captives” we were, but to sanctify it. “For their cause,” He says, “I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth<sup>r</sup> ;” and, “Both He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one<sup>s</sup>.” By His perfect obedience as man and His sinless birth, He became the author of a new race, who should be partakers of His holiness, as before of Adam’s transgression; who should be in Him, as before in Adam. He partook of all which was ours save sin, that He might make us partakers of all which was His; of His holiness, His life, His incorruption: whence the Apostle addresses Christians, as not merely sanctified, but as “sanctified in Him<sup>t</sup> ;” he speaks of Him as “made unto us sanctification<sup>u</sup> ;” not merely as causing us to be sanctified by any outward means, but being Himself our sanctification, by dwelling in us, imparting Himself to us; and we are “sanctified,” not by Him only, but “in Him,” in that we

<sup>a</sup> Heb. iv. 12.

<sup>r</sup> S. John xvii. 19.

<sup>s</sup> Heb. ii. 11.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Cor. i. 2.

<sup>u</sup> Ib. v. 30.

are re-born in Him, are made verily and indeed members of Him.

We then are indeed concerned in all which His sacred Humanity did, suffered, yea, and wherein it was glorified, not only because it was necessary to our redemption, that He Who paid our price should be without sin; but because it is our nature, it belongs to us, or rather we to It, as It to Him; and what He bestowed upon It, wrought by It and in It, He did for our sakes, that, through It, it might overflow to us His members. In It the Holy Spirit dwelt, that He might afterwards dwell in us. “<sup>u</sup> I sanctify myself for their cause,” He saith, “that they also may be sanctified.” So then we are partakers of all which is His. As He was, in His human nature, “conceived by the Holy Ghost,” so are we “born from above of water and the Spirit;” as He suffered, so in Him have we “suffered in the flesh <sup>v</sup>.” So did Apostles “suffer with Him <sup>w</sup>,” “with Him were crucified <sup>x</sup>,” as He died, so are we “dead with Him <sup>y</sup>,” He was buried, so we “by baptism into His death <sup>z</sup>,” as He rose again, so are we “corisen with Him <sup>a</sup>.” Nay, as He shall come again to judge the quick and dead, so, in some mysterious way, “the saints shall judge the world <sup>b</sup>,” as “His kingdom shall have no end,” so “shall they reign” with Him “for ever and ever <sup>c</sup>.” All has He made ours, save the descent into hell, “whither He went that we might not <sup>d</sup>,” yea, and when we too shall pass to the unseen abode, for the Saints it is to “be

<sup>u</sup> S. John xvii. 19.    <sup>v</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 1.    <sup>w</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 12.    <sup>x</sup> Gal. ii. 23.

<sup>y</sup> Col. ii. 20.

<sup>z</sup> Rom. iv. 20.

<sup>a</sup> Col. ii. 26; iii. 1.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 2.

<sup>c</sup> Rev. xxii. 5.

<sup>d</sup> Bp. Andrewes's Devotions.

with Christ." As He has ascended into heaven, so have we been "e made to sit together in heavenly places in Him<sup>f</sup>." He was the true light dwelling among us, that we might be "light in Him<sup>g</sup>;" what of ourselves we could not have, He gave us, remission of sins, redemption, freedom from wrath. But more than this, He gave us what is His, Sonship, that as He was the Son by Nature, so in Him should we be real though adopted sons; inheritance of heaven—that as He is by right "heir of all things," so should we be co-heirs in Him; righteousness—that we might be not accounted only, but made, not righteous only, as man might be, but be "made the righteousness of God in Him<sup>h</sup>;" the Father's love—that we who were by nature alienated and hateful, and (fearful as it is to say) "haters of God<sup>i</sup>," should be loved by Him as sons, nay more, should be loved in Him Who is the well-beloved Son, should be "accepted in the Beloved." And He Who has given us all these things, what should He withhold from us? "He Who hath given us His Son, how should He not with Him freely give us all things?" And so, as the voice from heaven was for our sakes<sup>k</sup>, as for our sakes He prayed to the Father, so for us also was manifested that excellent glory on the holy mount. For so the Apostle says, "that as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly<sup>l</sup>." Such was God's eternal purpose towards those who are His. "m He did predestinate them to be con-

<sup>e</sup> Eph. ii. 6.    <sup>f</sup> Ib. v. 8.    <sup>g</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.    <sup>h</sup> Rom. i. 30.

<sup>i</sup> S. John xii. 30.    <sup>k</sup> Ib. xi. 42.    <sup>l</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 49.

<sup>m</sup> Rom. viii. 29.



formed to the image of His Son." "He shall change our vile body that it should be like unto His glorious body," that Body which was then so glorified, that His disciples' eyes could not bear to look on it. Like unto His shall ours be. Such are the glories, such the bliss, which God has in store for them who love Him, not only to be *with* God, to be before His holy throne, beholding His blissful Countenance, saying, with angels and archangels, Holy! Holy! Holy! to be by Him upheld in life, but ourselves to be full of God, to live in Him, having His life in us, to "shine as the stars," through His pure light penetrating our then spiritual bodies, shining from within us as It then transfigured the Body which for us He deigned to take, and making us "all light, and in no part dark," glorious through His glory, blessed through His bliss, to love through His love within us Who is love, to be not ourselves only, but to be "partakers of His Nature."

Oh blessedness beyond all thought! Unutterable riches of the mercy of God, to be for ever not our own, but to be His, His by creation, His by redemption, His by re-creation, but His too by His Indwelling, His Life, His Love, His Glory, His Light, His Wisdom, His Immortality, within us; yea all but His Infinity, and That the endless Object of our enraptured contemplation, never cloying, never exhausted, because He is infinite; to be wholly His, in Him, and yet because we cannot contain Him, to have Him without us, to gaze on with loving adoration and adoring love; by Him and through Him and in Him, to be enabled to see, love, hold,

receive Himself; ever receiving, yet never sated; ever contemplating, yet never wearied; ever loving with unchanging, unbroken, undistracted love, because our whole selves shall be in every part, action, affection, indwelt by Him! Oh unutterable blessedness, to be so wholly, inseparably, closely His!

And this, in their several degrees, is, it must reverently be said, although they know it not, true in His faithful servants now. This is the special gift of the Sacraments of our Lord, that they are not only means of grace, but that they invisibly join us on to Him. The one is the means whereby we are born of God, born of the Spirit, though invisibly, as really as we are washed with the water visibly, born sons of God, because we are made members of the ever-blessed Son. By the other, our Lord Himself comes invisibly to us, is Himself the living Bread whereby we live, Himself "dwelleth in us, and we in Him<sup>o</sup>," is Himself "eternal life in us<sup>p</sup>." We, as I said, have been made partakers of His Death, Passion, Resurrection, Life; we also, if we be faithful, are being made partakers of His glory. For this the Apostle expressly says, that "we with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord<sup>q</sup>," contemplating Him, and seeking by prayer and daily diligence to have His Image, line by line, retraced in us, are "being changed into the same image from glory to glory, through the Lord the Spirit." Through that indwelling glory did the face of St. Stephen shine like the face of an angel. Even now we do sometimes see the face of God's saints gleam with unearthly purity and love. Even now, as the part-

<sup>o</sup> S. John vi. 56.    <sup>p</sup> Ib. 47, 48. 51.    <sup>q</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 16. 18.

ing spirit sometimes sees heaven open, and hears and almost feels the brushing of angels' wings who shall carry it, or knows the room to be full of angels<sup>r</sup>, or sees the Redeemer Himself, so does the body catch the light it is approaching. Even now, ere we resign the sacred remains to be sown in dishonour, the solemn peace and holy calm spread over them, seem to tell us by Whom they were inhabited; yea, that though quitted by the soul, they are not forsaken by Him Whose temple they were. They seem yet, like the parted spirit, to "live in Him." The evening so closed-in seems the dawning of the Resurrection. Nay, so instinct with divine life have been these tabernacles wherein God dwelt, that, as we know, the touch of the bones of Elisha, on whom "a double portion" of his great master's "Spirit rested," shot instant life into the body of the dead, so that as an image of the resurrection, "it revived and stood on its feet<sup>s</sup>;" and what happened once only under the old dispensation, has been more frequent since the Holy Spirit more fully dwelt in man; the death of God's martyrs has by Him been glorified; the dead have protected the living; they who themselves "seemed to perish" by persecution's sword, held back the persecution which threatened His servants yet in the flesh<sup>t</sup>.

Such is a portion of God's designs towards us, as fulfilled in those who are His: such His unutterable mercies "to those who" will "receive Him." For

<sup>r</sup> Instances known to the writer.

<sup>s</sup> 2 Kings xiii. 21.

<sup>t</sup> The Arian persecution against St. Ambrose. See St. Augustine's Confessions, ix. 7, and Notes, Oxford Transl.; Church of the Fathers, c. iii.

them His Son sanctified our nature; by His indwelling Spirit He communicates to them that holiness which He gave it; He sanctifies their whole body, soul, and spirit; He spiritualizes their very bodies, that they may "become like His glorious body." But there is a fearful, and one must dread, a far more frequent contrast to all this; how this implanted life gradually becomes extinct; the Spirit is gradually quenched; instead of the body becoming spiritualized, the soul becomes carnalized, fleshly; instead of the countenance being hallowed by the Holy Spirit, it seems rather to betray the workings, one must fear often the indwelling, of that bad spirit which was once cast out, but, with the seven worse spirits, has been allowed to return; instead of holding out an earnest of the joys of heaven, the life, the words, the thoughts, the actions, the very look, seem to speak of hell. The reality of the Indwelling of the Divine Spirit in those who obey Him, throws an awful light on the reality of that of which our Lord also spake, the indwelling, of the evil spirit in those who obey *him*. "They dwell there;" a sevenfold spirit of evil as opposed to the One, but sevenfold, Spirit of Truth; so that as the souls of the saints are led by the indwelling "Spirit," and He rules their life, exalts their senses, fills their minds, sanctifies their thoughts, is the Author of their actions, so in the souls of those who have emptied themselves of Him, Satan dwells, rules their actions, prompts their words, moves their limbs, is at last the living Death within them, filling their every part; he is the spirit, whom their soul and body obey. Their threefold nature remains, body,



soul, spirit; but the spirit is of evil. As the actions, thoughts, life of the perfected saint, are God's within him, so are the will, actions, joys, of the completed sinner, Satan's; he is but the instrument, whom the inhabiting spirit moves at will. Not that one must judge individuals; but one must fear for them, and, at best, stand in awe if not fear, for ourselves. The way to life is narrow; how must one not fear for those who seem to be walking on the broad? "The way of life is above;" how not fear for those whose thoughts seem all below? "The way of life is in keeping God's commandments;" how not fear for those who are habitually breaking them? The way of life, Scripture says, is "through much tribulation," "bearing hardness," "deeds of charity," "forgivingness;" how not fear for those who are "taking their ease," are luxurious, are penurious in charity, who seldom or never give, or who forgive not? We may not judge; but since there is a certain character which leads to Hell, in whatever way or degree any seem to partake of it, they must be objects of sorrowful concern to us. In whatever way any seem to partake of it—then, my Brethren, we have much need of anxious concern for ourselves too. In all except reprobates and perfected saints, there are the elements of both heaven and hell within; their old nature tending to decay and death, ever ready to break out, strengthened, in most, by former or present negligence or sloth or falls, and the new nature, by Baptism imparted, the day-spring of everlasting life, the life of Christ within us, the light of Heaven, which has been dimmed by sin, or fed with the oil of God's

Holy Spirit, and through His blessed guidance, the oil of good works, of alms-deeds, of joy in God,—in most, a “dimly-burning flax,” not yet “quenched,” but through His long-suffering only, kept in life. All of us, young or old, in our several ways, have in us what would be earnest and foretastes of everlasting joy or of everlasting fire. All have what pertains to the nature of Angels and of devils. All have the flesh; all, unless they be reprobate, have still some portion of the Spirit. In almost all, too likely, the flesh, in some grosser or more subtle form, has had its sway; in the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life:” in all, it is an unceasing enemy, chained, if it be so, only by God’s power blessing our faith, our love, our watchfulness, which He gave us; in all, active; and most in those who know not its power, because they never strove to stem its tide; in all, to be subdued, if they would escape eternal death.

Between these two, then, lies the course of men. Here only are we two selves; hereafter unity is to be wholly good or wholly evil; either all to be transfigured into the glory of our Lord, or all to be debased to hell; all to be spiritual, or all carnal. And in this contrast of flesh and spirit all around us partake; and every thing may be made, on one side or the other, to minister to this conflict. As God created this our world for us, every thing was adapted for our twofold nature. As man is body and soul, so throughout nature and grace, the works of God and His word and His ordinances, there is one great contrast, of things outward and inward, of body and Spirit, of the lower form and the higher reality. As

God made man upright and obedient to Himself, so would this inferior world have been obedient to man, and ministered to him; the things of sight would naturally have ministered to things unseen; the flesh would have been a helpmate to the spirit; eye, ear, touch, taste, would in every thing have seen, heard, felt, fed on God; in Him we had then "lived and moved and had our being," not as now, by nature, unknowingly and thanklessly, like the beasts which perish, but He had been the breath of our life, the centre of our being, the Sun to which our soul ever turned, our Life, whereon we hung. Creation had talked to us ever of the Creator; all had been lovely, and all loved in Him; Nature had indeed "led up to Nature's God." But as man's sin has marred nature, flesh and spirit, instead of harmonizing together, are at variance; man's disobedience to God has made nature a rebel to him<sup>u</sup>; his will not being subject to God, neither are the things, once by God subjected to him, obedient to him any longer; his higher self having obeyed his lower, and disobeyed God, his spirit having been subject to his appetites, nature too is freed from her obedience to him; he is punished wherein he had offended; all around, beneath, in him, rebels against the rebel to his God. Henceforth flesh and spirit are in one endless conflict; every thing may become a means of seduction. The sun, moon, and stars which God ordained, as they walked in beauty, enslaved his soul, and bowed him down to them instead of their Maker. Every thing beautiful became, in turn, an idol, yea, every thing hateful too. Man ceased to fear God and love Him, and so,

<sup>u</sup> St. Augustine, Confessions vii. 7, and note g. Oxf. Tr.

since he must fear and love, he loved and feared the creatures of God with an unholy love and unholy fear. "Glorifying God not as God," he feared Satan, whose gifts he loved. He thanked Satan for God's gifts, which he took at Satan's hands; as God saith, "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold which they made into Baal<sup>v</sup>." So also he knew not God's voice of awe, wherewith, in trouble or the terrors of our disordered nature, He spoke to him and called him to return, but sought the more to appease the master he had chosen, Satan; "their sons and their daughters have they sacrificed unto devils." "They have not cried unto Me in their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and rebel against Me<sup>w</sup>." "As for the word that thou hast spoken to us in the Name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee: but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out our drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers—for then had we plenty of vic-tuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But when we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and the famine<sup>x</sup>." Man must be like his God. If he become not like the true God, he must make him false gods like himself, and in them worship unknowingly the god of this world, whose portion and doom he chooseth. The god of man's natural heart is like itself, evil; savage nations, who know no other god, worship an evil principle. Ha-

<sup>v</sup> Hos. ii. 8.

<sup>w</sup> Ib. vii. 14.

<sup>x</sup> Jer. xlv. 15—18.



tred or love, beauty or loathsomeness, hope or fear, desire or aversion, possession or loss, success or failure, joyousness or suffering, rise or fall, to those who are not in God, alike alienate the more from God. As "all things work together for good to those who love God," so to those who do not love Him, do all to evil.

Would, my Brethren, that one could speak of this as past; as belonging to "the times of ignorance, whereat God winked," to the Heathen only who knew not God! The same dangers surround us now; we are set amid the same snares, and have the same ensnaring heart. Every thing within us and without may be hallowed to God; and every thing, within us and without, may be, and more often are, desecrated to Satan; every thing may, and does, minister to Heaven or Hell. Our health may minister to serenity of mind, or, more often, to self-confidence and want of sympathy; our sickness to resignation or fretfulness; the most sacred losses may lead to penitence, or to repining and feverish tossings, and discontent with God, or, again, to hard-heartedness; our good actions may serve to self-display, or the love of Him Whom in them we serve; our best earthly affections may be a love in and for God, or be idolatry and a subtle selfishness: our study of nature and of the laws imposed upon nature, may make us fall down and worship Him Who gave those laws, or our own understanding, which discovered them; it may be holy or godless; the enjoyment of natural beauties may be pure and holy, or may be mere excitement and sensual; the highest things may be made subservient to the meanest, or the

poorest infirmities of our weak nature may minister to the highest; music may be the minstrelsy of the heavenly harps, singing the song of the Lamb, or it may be the excitement and voluptuousness of the day; our knowledge may be mere distraction amid the manifold things of sense, wasting our minds with the husks wherewith we feed it, or it may tend to the love of Him Who passeth knowledge; our eating and drinking may be with the beasts which perish, or they may be types of our heavenly food, our feeding on Him Who is the Bread of life; unhallowed sleep is the image of eternal death; if we lay down to take our rest in Him, it is repose in the everlasting arms, watched by Angels, "visited," it may be, "with His visitations to His own," the putting off of weakness; and our waking in the morning, may be the type of the Resurrection. Nay, even that dryness of soul, under which God sometimes allows His servants to suffer, but quickens that thirst after righteousness, which He fills; the very loathsomeness of Satan's touch, defiling the imagination with the memory of former sins, but deepens the penitent's remorse, and that abasement which shall be raised up.

In the midst of such things is our life. We are, day by day and hour by hour, influenced by every thing around us; rising or falling, sinking or recovering, receiving impressions which are to last for ever; taking our colour and mould from every thing which passes around us and in us, and not the less because unperceived; each touch slight, as impressed by an invisible spiritual hand, but, in itself, not

† Bp. Andrewes's Devotions, Even. Prayer, Tract lxxxviii. p. 16.

the less, rather the more lasting, since what we are yielding ourselves to is, in the end, the finger of God or the touch of Satan. In our rising up or our lying down; our labour or our refreshment; our intercourse with others, or our solitary thoughts; our plans for the future, or the duties of the day; our purposes and their fulfilments or their failure, our acting or our suffering, we are receiving moment by moment the hallowed impress of the Heavenly Hand, conforming our lineaments, one by one, each faculty of our spirit, and this poor earthly tenement of our body itself, to the image of God wherein we were re-created, or we are gradually being dried up and withered by the blasting burning touch of the Arch-fiend; each touch is of fire, burning out our proud rebellious flesh, or searing our life; some more miserable falls sink us deeper; some more difficult victories, won by God's help over ourselves, the flesh, the world, and Satan, raise us on the heavenward path; but each sense, at every avenue, each thought, each word, each act, is in its degree doing that endless work; every evil thought, every idle word, and still more, each wilful act, is stamping upon men the mark of the beast; each slightest deed of faith is tracing deeper the seal of God upon their foreheads. "Touch not, taste not, handle not," says Holy Scripture, and so teaches how every sense may minister to evil; by self-indulgence, by sensuality, by voluptuousness, by selfishness, in all the various forms of sin in which self bursts out, gross or refined, injurious to our neighbour, or hurting him only by bad example, detecting itself by outward acts, or poisoning secretly the well-spring of our own life, men are

gradually grieving away the good Spirit of God ; by anger, because He is gentle ; by envy, because He is loving ; by uncleanness, because He is pure, by vanity, because He resisteth the proud and dwelleth in the humble heart ; by lying, because He is the Spirit of Truth ; by excess in eating and drinking, because these directly sensualize the soul, and He is a Holy Spirit ; by overt sins of the flesh, because they are “<sup>a</sup> defiling of His temple.” By the opposite to all these, His gracious Indwelling is the more invited, because He is a loving Spirit, seeking to communicate Himself to all who will receive Him, and enlarging the more their souls who act on His holy impulses, that they may receive Him more ; yea, and after we have fallen even deeply, by penitence, by fasting, by abstinence, by self-chastisement, by enduring, penitential prayer, by self-denying charity, by all which St. Paul calls “bearing hardness” or “<sup>a</sup> revenge,” He will again burn out our filth by His heavenly fire, lightening our darkness, that we be not cast into outer darkness, consuming our dross, that we “perish not at His Presence” Who “is a consuming Fire,” purifying our spotted sacrifice, though we be but “lame, and sick, and blind, and polluted,” and unfit to be offered to the “Great King<sup>b</sup>,” hallowing it, and presenting it hallowed by His own holiness.

Such are we, such our life, such our endless end : ourselves, in God’s purpose and mercy, fitted to be vessels of honour to His praise and glory, but liable, by our own negligence or wilfulness, to become but vessels of His wrath : for middle path there is none ;

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 17.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 11.

<sup>b</sup> Mal. i. 7, 8, 14.



there are but two paths, the broad and the narrow; two guides, the Good Shepherd or the Destroyer; two ends, God or hell. If by God's grace the flesh be subdued to the spirit, then shall it also partake of the Spirit; it too, which causes or bears suffering now, shall have its reward; it also has its share in the resurrection; so that the happiness of "the just made perfect," nay, of St. Paul himself, though present with his Lord, shall not be perfect until he receive again, as a spiritual body, the body of this death, which he brought into subjection, which he handled roughly<sup>c</sup>, from which he longed to be delivered<sup>d</sup>. Oh! mysterious greatness of our nature, that the disembodied spirit, even when "with Christ" Himself, and contemplating in Him the Ever-blessed Trinity, should not yet have its fullest happiness, until this mortal flesh, conceived in sin, ever prone to rebel, the heir of corruption, be restored to it, purified, glorified, Deified. Oh! strange condescension of God, that the Son of God should take our nature, fulfilling the fallen spirit's deceitful promise, "Ye shall be as gods," making us temples of His Spirit here, and hereafter conforming our vile bodies to be like unto His glorious Body, in which the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily! Oh! awful sacredness of this poor body, which men so defile, misuse, deck, trick out, pamper, surfeit, subject to vanity and corruption, that here it is to be by Baptism the dwelling-place of the Ever-blessed Trinity; into it our Lord Himself deigns to enter; it hereafter is to become all spiritual; though a body still, it is to be attempered to the spirit, and the spirit

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 27.<sup>d</sup> Rom. vii. 24.<sup>e</sup> Gen. iii. 5.

to God, and soul body and spirit are to be full of God, and partake of God! Oh! miserable deceitfulness of sin, which, when for the endurance of a few short years, all this eternal likeness, participation, oneness with God, are held out to it, will tempt the many to exchange all this and the soul itself for its passing bitter pleasures; to forfeit the spirit, and corrupt the soul, until it becomes decayed, like the body itself, yea, body and spirit alike decayed, earthly, sensual, devilish; and that which was once the habitation of the Blessed Trinity, be the abode of all filthiness and uncleanness, the dwelling-place of devils<sup>f</sup>; its spiritual nature become fleshly, and the high prerogatives which it once had, remain only, in that it is capable of an immortality of suffering.

Our Lord stretcheth forth His hands to bless us, but it is in the form of His Cross<sup>g</sup>. His Transfiguration is our glory. It sets forth that glory to us, but also how it was to be won for us, by bearing the Cross for us; how it was to be won by us, by bearing our's after Him, in His strength, and following Him. But His Cross alone is meritorious, our's is acceptable only, because He Whom in that holy mount we were bid to hear, commands us to take it up. Our cross is, in itself the emblem of the punishment which we deserve; yet for the sake of Him Who bore it undeserved, our cross, the penalty of our sin, through our faith conveys to us the merits of His sinlessness, conforms us to His suffering, that we may also with Him be glorified.

<sup>f</sup> St. Jerome.

<sup>g</sup> In allusion to the Picture of the Transfiguration.

Such as He manifested Himself to the Church then, must we again see Him. He then will again stretch forth His arms to receive those whom He will own as His. But how, in that day of awe, when, awakened by the Archangel's trumpet, we shall receive again our bodies, in them to receive the things done in the body, how shall we go forth to meet Him? Shall we bring with us to the Day of Judgement, treasures of earthly wealth, prepared at best by the carefulness which He forbids, by worldliness, "rising up early and late taking rest," and, amid this, hardheartedness or hardhearted neglect of His poor, and, too likely, refined evil-dealing? Or shall we go forth, in soft clothing and living delicately, careless about others' wants, and in all thinking only or first of self; with the ambitious titles of dignity or fame, seeking pre-eminence, feeding our vanity or pride? Shall we thus say to Him, "Lo! these are the marks of Thy Cross," and hope that He will recognise His mark upon us? Shall we hope that we shall be made like Him in that Day, if we are in all things so unlike Him in this? No! Christ must be followed, despising all things. He would have us gain by losing, become rich by poverty, blessed by suffering, honoured by shame, exalted through lowliness, be bound up by being broken-hearted, joy through sorrow, live through death, through labour enter into rest. For so He emptied Himself of the riches of His glory, to take on Him our shame, and suffering, and lowliness, to be "bruised for our transgressions," to die that we might live. He follows a crucified Master, who is himself crucified to the world; he is crucified to the world,

who seeks it not, loves it not, parts with its goods largely to Christ's poor, seeks nothing in it but not to be defiled by it, to use it so as to be approved by his Master, to the glory of God.

It is not, then, to admire, to criticize, to speak of, that that holy mystery of your Saviour's Life has here been pourtrayed to you<sup>h</sup>. It is that in it you may behold the end of your existence, the reward of your daily warfare and cross, the glory which shall be revealed, faintly shadowed out to you. It is that, on entering this holy place, your thoughts may be the more lifted off from the earth, that you may long to be less earthly, less unlike Him, and pray the more for that blessed coming of His kingdom, when they that are His shall be "<sup>i</sup>caught up to meet their Lord in the air," and be with Him, not in three tabernacles or in a passing vision, but be "for ever with the Lord." It is that, returning home, you may carry on more cheerfully your daily strife with "<sup>k</sup>the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life," as having been lifted up to think of "<sup>l</sup>the glory which He had with the Father before the world was," but which He veiled in our flesh, that we through His Flesh might partake of it. It is, that you may be the more content to be lowly, as being the followers of Him, Who once only manifested the glory which ever dwelt in Him, and then bade those who saw it, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead<sup>m</sup>."

<sup>h</sup> The Transfiguration of our Lord, after Raffaele, lately painted for the east window of the Church, for which this Sermon was written.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 17.

<sup>k</sup> 1 S. John ii. 16.

<sup>l</sup> S. John xvii. 5.

<sup>m</sup> S. Matth. xvii. 9.



It is, that as you approach the Holy Altar, your faith may be strengthened, in that as when He was in the flesh He appeared but the son of the carpenter, had no form nor comeliness, but by the eye of faith was seen to be "the Son of the Living God," so now what you behold, handle, taste, are elements of this world, but to the spiritual eye, touch, taste, they are the Redeemer's Body and Blood, whereby our sinful bodies are cleansed and our souls washed, that soul and body may by His imparted Virtue be preserved unto everlasting life. It is, that when you return to the world, whether to do or to endure, in life's daily duties or heavier trials, in childhood's petty struggles or manhood's toils or the weariness of age and sorrow, you may ever hear that voice of the Father, "This is My Beloved Son; hear Him." It is that doing what He saith, you may hope for what He promiseth; so, when He comes again, of you, as "accepted in the Beloved," it shall be said, in your degree, "This is My beloved son;" to you, too, it shall be said, "Come, ye blessed children of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" so shall you too be transfigured into that unutterable glory of His glorious Body, "according to that mighty power whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself," and shall shine like the stars for ever and ever, yea, and above the stars; for it shall be in His glory, Who made the stars, God of God, Light of Light, inapproachable but indwelling.

## SERMON XIX.

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### CHRISTIAN JOY.

(PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY).

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Psalm cxviii. 34.

*“This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.”*

ON all days and at all times indeed, my brethren, should the amazing act of God's loving-kindness, which hallows this our festival, be present to our minds. For it includes in itself, it is the pledge, as well as the commencement, of every other act of mercy; it heightens them all; it sets them all before our eyes, as we can most bear to look at them. We are so much accustomed (blessed be God) to hear from infancy of the Incarnation of the Son of God, of His taking our nature upon Him, of His being born of a virgin, that unless we take pains to impress upon our minds what this means, we are in danger of forgetting the surpassing greatness of God's love and condescension therein conveyed. And, therefore, has God, through His Church, ordained this day, a day especially of joy and gladness. It is, indeed, “a day, which the Lord has made;” a peculiar day; a day, in which He has

made a new and inconceivable thing, a mystery, which the angels desire to look into; whose greatness, they who can conceive it most, must feel to be most unsearchable; for it cometh from the unfathomable depths of the Divine Love. "God manifest in the flesh!" We are accustomed to the words, my brethren; yet if we think we can comprehend or measure the truth, which they contain, as yet we know nothing. It is when, having dwelt upon them with a subdued and chastened spirit, we confess that God's judgements are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out, it is then that we begin to understand them: our confession of our insufficiency is the very condition and the first step to our understanding of things divine. "God manifest in the flesh!" What is this *in itself*, but that He Who was "in the Form of God" "took upon Himself the form of a servant;" He Who was, and is invisible, became the object of our mortal senses; He Whom the Heaven of Heavens could not contain, confined Himself within an earthly body; the Eternal united Himself with our transitory nature; the Immortal clothed Himself with mortality; the Holy Son of God took upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh; He Who was with God, and was God, became man; He by Whom all things were made, took of His mother the nature which He had created? These are only different ways of saying the same great truth, "God manifest in the flesh," of impressing upon ourselves the same great contradiction, the union of Holiness with unholiness, God's Infinity with our nothingness: so, where our understanding fails, there we may begin to adore; so may we bless

God for the boundlessness of His mercy, and thank Him that we cannot fathom it.

“God manifest in the flesh!” What is this *to us*, but that our Creator came down to His creatures in order to raise us up to Him; that the Holy One descended to sinners, to restore to them their lost purity; that Truth came down to us who were in error; Light to us who sat in darkness; Life to us, who were in the shadow of death?

Not alone to die for us, did the Son of God leave the glory of His Father, but to live for us, and in us, to conquer our great enemy Satan, in the very nature which he had defeated and corrupted; to burst in His own Person the bonds by which we were held captive; to cut off the taint of descent, which we had derived from our first father’s transgression; to give our nature a new origin and birth, that, as “by His Death He destroyed death,” so by His Birth He might amend the condition of our birth. By being born He took our nature, that we by being re-born might partake of His, that we might become members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost. Much as He had bestowed upon us, by creating us in His likeness, much more exceedingly did He bless us, when He took upon Him our likeness, the form of a servant. For as a bishop of the ancient Church says<sup>a</sup>, “the birth of Christ is the origin of the Christian people, the birth-day of the Lord is that of His body, the Church.” As then we are crucified with Christ in His Cross, raised in His Resurrection, placed by His Ascension at God’s right hand, so are we born with Him now. For whoever

<sup>a</sup> S. Leo, from whom several other expressions are taken.



is regenerated in Christ is no longer in the stock of his earthly father, but ingrafted in his Saviour, Who became the Son of Man, that we might become the sons of God.

Great then and wonderful are the blessings, which this day recalls to us. On this Day was our redemption sealed to us; for He Who humbled Himself to take the nature of His creature, the likeness of sinful man, how should He not finish the work of mercy, which He came to perform? On this Day was our redemption sealed, the enemy of our souls vanquished, our nature reconciled to God, and God to our fallen nature; yea, our nature was reborn, regenerate, raised above what it was when God pronounced it good, since now it is inseparably united with the Ever-blessed Son of God; and thus, as many of us as are truly united with Him, are, as St. Peter says, “<sup>b</sup> partakers of the Divine Nature.” And for this cause, our Church, following the example of God’s Word and of the ancient Church, (as you will have observed in the Collect and the Gospel of this day, and again, as you will perceive in the second lesson selected for this evening,) has sought to connect in our minds the memory of our Saviour’s birth, and that of our own new spiritual “birth unto righteousness,” which He bestowed upon us in Baptism; that Birth which, in as many of us as have not stifled the workings of God’s Holy Spirit, has been springing up in us into eternal life; which in as many as, having fallen, have been again restored, has been the pledge, the source, the origin of that restoration; which in all who are advancing hea-

<sup>b</sup> 2 S. Pet. i. 4.

venwards, is the sole spring of that advancement. "Almighty God" (she teaches us to pray), "Who hast given Thy Only-Begotten Son, to take our nature upon Him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin, grant that we being regenerate" (i. e. who have been born again), "and made Thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit." He has so united these truths in His Church, as having blended them in His Word.

As by St. Paul He has united our new birth with our Baptism, "the washing of regeneration," so by St. John in the Gospel does He with the birth of our Lord. For when about to declare the fulness of the mysteries of the incarnate Word, He tells us, that "to as many as received Him, He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His Name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God: and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He sets before us God the Word, becoming Man, that men, believing Him, might from Him receive power to become sons of God. By St. Paul He teaches us how we were made partakers of that birth, by His free, electing, irrespective love, which when we had nothing good, when we had done no works of righteousness, "saved us by the washing" of our "regeneration," or our new birth, renewing us by the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

This is, indeed, then, "a day which the Lord hath made," in which we *should* rejoice and be glad: it is a day of joy to all, since the Son of God came to free

<sup>c</sup> S. John i. 12—14.

<sup>d</sup> Titus iii. 5.

all who were bound, and we were all the servants of sin; He came to give life to the dead, and we were all "dead in trespasses and sin." It is a day of joy to the sinner, because it proclaims pardon and peace to him; to the sanctified, because it is the source of his holiness; to us all, because it tells that we shall be judged by Him, Who knows our infirmities, and stooped to our weaknesses. Such is its joy, that the Church has appointed that it should change even our weekly fast, in memory of our Saviour's sufferings, into a feast and day of joy. The day of His bitter agony becomes a day of child-like joy\*. Our fathers hallowed it as a day of joy. The rich still wish to make it a day of joy to the poor, or, as far as they can, wish that want or cold should not prevent its being such: we usher it in with signs of joy; we wish each other that it may be a time of joy. In this season of the year, when all nature seems to be dead, we still collect together the few remains of life, and deck our houses, and this house of God, with the emblems of life and joy. Families, at other times separated, re-assemble now, as far as they can; their re-union is a source of joy, and an emblem of the union of that one great family, which God is forming in heaven and in earth, never again to be severed, because united in His Son; we have from childhood learned to look on this season as a season of joy; we bear witness to ourselves (would that it might not be against ourselves!) that we should "rejoice and be glad." But is it really so? Joy, whereof Scripture speaketh, is not what the world

\* Preached when Christmas Day fell on Friday.

calls joyousness; it is not mere outward joy; much less that mirth, which is obtained by noisy mingling with others and by forgetfulness of ourselves, or by that thoughtlessness of mind, which, by remaining in wilful ignorance of many lurking corners of itself, the motives of its actions, its real state towards God, and its everlasting sentence, contrives to persuade itself that all will in some way be well, that God will not keep to His threatenings, but that He will have mercy upon those, to whom He has in His Holy Word declared, that He will show no mercy. I speak not of such unhappy, hollow rejoicings as these. Mirth is not joy; “‘the end of that mirth,” Scripture says, “is heaviness.” God allows us outward joys; He deals tenderly with us, as with children. Only the source of all our joys must not be outward, but from within, from Him: all must come from Him, be enjoyed in Him, in the sense of His Presence, must lead up to Him: (He is our Life, our Lord, the Husband of our spirits.) All joy is idolatry which stops short in His creatures; all joy is adulteress joy which joys in aught without Him. The joy, whereof Scripture speaketh, is a deep, tranquil, inward, abiding joy, to which all other joys are to minister, which arises in the Christian from the knowledge that he hath been made a child of God, from the sense of God’s continual mercies, from looking to things eternal, from the hope that he is a living member of his redeeming Lord, from looking for his Lord’s return, that; when this passing scene shall soon be closed, sin and infirmity and negligence will lose their last grasp upon him, the body

<sup>f</sup> Prov. xiv. 13.



of this death shall be swallowed up in life, and he shall be translated to the Presence of His Saviour and His God.

This joy, springing, as it does, from the inward fountain placed within the heart, that well of water, which bursteth up into everlasting life, depends not upon any thing without. It had its origin in the knowledge of God's mercies in Christ, in having been redeemed out of the evil world, and having been placed by Baptism in Christ's fold; it has been strengthened by every other act of mercy, whether of preserving us in the fold, or recalling us when we had wandered from it; it has increased with every victory which God has enabled the Christian to obtain over the enemies of his salvation, the Devil, the world, and the flesh; it has been strengthened, whenever our Saviour has imparted His precious Body and Blood to us. How then should it depend upon things outward, except as far as they serve to the inward life? "¶ Neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword," says the apostle, "can separate us from the love" which Christ bears us. "Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." How then should they diminish our joy? The Christian's rejoicing is, that his Saviour, his God, Who for his sake became Man, has, yea does, love him; that wherever he goes, his Saviour accompanies him, as a friend; He shields him from temptation, supports him lest He fall, yea, "h when thou passest through the waters, He shall be with thee," "i in the valley of

¶ Rom. viii. 37—39.

h Isa. xliii. 2.

i Ps. xxiii.

the shadow of death He shall be thy shepherd; His rod and His staff shall comfort thee." The Christian's joy is in God, by Whom, forsaking Him not, he shall not be forsaken; yea, Who, amid all his frailties, forsaketh him not so that he should forsake Him; how then should a stranger intermeddle with his joy? It is in the Creator, the Abiding, Unchangeable, the Living, the True; how should that joy be shaken by His creatures, which, in so far as they are not in Him, are fleeting, changeable, dead, unsubstantial? It is in Him Who is our Abiding place<sup>k</sup>; what can it fear? our Possession<sup>l</sup>; what can it lose? it is our Peace<sup>m</sup>; what can trouble it? it is our Rest; what can disturb it? it is our Life; what can destroy it? How should life, or death, or any other creature be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ his Lord?

Such is the Christian's joy; alike, whether alone or in society, in sickness or in health, in ease or in distress, in comfort or in suffering. Alike, did I say? Nay, more powerful when alone, for then is God more present to his soul, and his soul more drawn to his God; it is deepened by distress or sickness or suffering, since these his afflictions are so many fresh proofs of his Father's love (for "n whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,"); they are so many more signs of his Redeemer's loving-kindness towards him, that he is deemed worthy of being "o purged, that he may bring forth more fruit." "All things are its;" all minister to it; things past, and present, and to come; mercies

<sup>k</sup> Ps. xc. 4.<sup>l</sup> Ps. xvi. 6.<sup>m</sup> Eph. ii. 4.<sup>n</sup> Heb. xii. 6.<sup>o</sup> S. John xv. 2.

past, privileges present, earnestness of hopes to come; yea, and its deepest source is what in human sight is the deepest suffering.

Such is the Christian's joy; and though it may not be expressed in words, and its sources perhaps may not be accurately understood, it may be, it is felt by every child in Christ, who seeks to love its Saviour, and keep His commandments. Nay, shame be upon us, it more often shines on the suffering death-bed of the dying child, than on the undisturbed decay of those of elder years; and that, not because these little ones are unconscious of sin, but because their unseared consciences are quickly apprehensive of it, and yet still more vividly (I speak of those who have been Christianly brought up in their baptismal engagements)—still more lively do they feel and take refuge in their Redeemer's love, Who for their sake became a little child, that they might be His.

Where then is this joy? Or why do we not see it every where? It is placed by St. Paul among the first-fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace;" as the fruits of having "had access given us to that grace wherein we stand." Our Lord Himself tells us, that "with joy" shall men give up every thing besides to gain the treasures which He giveth. It is a Christian grace; yet how few Christians even understand how it can be! how few can understand any other source of joy, than those natural motions of the human heart, its natural pulses, quickening with the affections with which God cheers our earthly life? How would men rightly shrink from thinking their joys a Christian virtue; how little do

they think that men can joy in pain and grief and tears, or that the sorrow of repentance<sup>p</sup> or "tribulation" can be "joy." How rare is it to find people, who would on reflection seriously say, that they had joy. And yet the joys, whereof the Apostles speak, were amid and in sufferings, for which we have no words nor thoughts; their "lives in jeopardy every hour," themselves "for God's sake were killed all the day long," "accounted as sheep for the slaughter," and yet, "glorying in" these their "tribulations."

Truly, we must confess that our Christian love has waxed very cold, and with it have decayed our peace and our joy, the fruits of that love.

Why, then, do so many not share the Christian's joy? The answer is too plain, my brethren; because persons are either not Christians, or are but almost Christians, or are half, weak, imperfect Christians. *They*, according to St. Paul, have this Christian joy, who "having been justified," or made righteous, "by faith, have peace with God;" *they* have it, St. Peter saith, who "not having seen Jesus Christ, love Him, in Whom, though now they see Him not, yet *believing*, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Our joy then is, that we have been adopted as sons in the Son, that we are no longer at enmity with God, that our wills are, on the whole, no longer rebellious against His will, but that we are at one with Him here, and trust to dwell with Him for ever. Joy is the very

<sup>p</sup> "Grant me ever to grieve, and of my grief to joy."—Ancient Prayer.

<sup>a</sup> Rom. v. 1.

<sup>r</sup> Ib. 2, 3.

<sup>s</sup> 1 S. Pet. i. 8.



Presence of God the Comforter within the soul, knitting it to God. Whatever, then, turns men aside from God, whatever relaxes our union with Him, must in the same degree destroy our joy; whatever causes Him to withdraw His Holy Presence, must withdraw His Comforting Presence. “<sup>t</sup>Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled.” To live in mortal sin, which destroys life, must destroy joy. They who sow to the flesh, must reap as they sow; they who sow the works of the flesh cannot reap “<sup>u</sup>the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, and peace.” Joy is in past pardon; how can it be when that pardon is for the time forfeited? It is in present Communion with God; how can it be, when mists of sin stand between man and his God? It is in hopes of future mercy; how can it be, when any thoughts of the future must be rather a “<sup>v</sup>fearful looking for of judgment?” The Christian alone can have the Christian’s joy. Rather, it is God’s greatest mercy to the sinner, that he should not have joy. To be out of God, and yet to have joy, were devilish; it must be joy in evil. God formed man for Himself; and so, while any traces of his origin yet remain, he can have no rest, except in God; as long as any life remains, it must be disquieted to be separated from Him, in Whom it lives. And, therefore, Satan strives to stifle these cravings, he feeds them with this world’s hopes and fears, displays an unreal world around them, gives the soul objects to seek which it can never attain, that in them it may forget itself and Him Whom it could attain, God. This is the real source of that hot seeking after this

<sup>t</sup> Ps. civ. 29.<sup>u</sup> Gal. v. 22.<sup>v</sup> Heb. x. 27.

world's pleasures, pomps, vanities, fierce short-lived joys, voluptuousness, display, excitement; it is to ease the aching heart, to take it off itself, to drown its misery in being separated from Him Who is its end. This is the greatest danger of the tumult wherein people live, lest they succeed in their miserable efforts, and so close themselves within their cares, and riches, and pleasures, that they leave no opening for the light of Heaven to burst in, and disclose the ghastliness of their joys, their utter misery. And so in such, as have not shut out God altogether, He takes the intervals of their earthly joys, and gives them weariness of heart, that they may learn that here is not their rest. Besides those more sudden strokes, whereby He stuns men and deafens them to the world, that they may hear His Voice, He mingles unsatisfactoriness with their pleasures, sends depression upon excitement, restlessness amid gratification, satiety on enjoyment, that the poor soul, wearied by very vanity, may at last seek out Him, its true joy and rest.

And so, in proportion, in all those lesser degrees of worldliness and sin, with which persons, who have yet some thoughts of heaven, waste their hopes. Joy is of God, and in God. Complete joy will be, when we are complete in God; in this our pilgrimage, it commences, grows, decays, is weak, or sickly, or overcast, or withdrawn, as we are more or less in Him. The highest saints, on whom their Saviour's Countenance most fully shone, still had their seasons of dreariness, and exclaimed, "How long wilt Thou absent Thyself, O Lord? for ever?"

<sup>w</sup> Ps. xiii. 1.

How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from us?" The faint uncertain gleams of that Countenance are vouchsafed to such as most of us, lighten our darkness, or are withheld, as we are in earnest seeking to do His will, or are remiss. But stedfastness of purpose, an earnest desire to serve Him with a whole heart, is the condition of all joy. To have His joy poured within us, we must be capable to joy in God. And they only can joy in God, who are at peace with Him; they only are at peace, who love Him above all besides.

They, then, cannot have joy, who, even although free from deadly sin, are again and again falling by divers temptations, whose besetting sins continually overtake them, and prevail; who admit within them feelings, which they disallow, thoughts, which they know to be wrong, habits which they condemn; and find themselves, year by year, growing no better, and if no better, then, it is to be feared, even worse. How can they have peace? and if no peace, what joy? For what is to have peace with God, but to have a will in unison with God's will, to approve what He approves, to abhor what He hates? How then can he be at peace with God, who is still pleased with those things which displease God, who still in part desires those things with which he knows God to be offended? How can he be at peace with God, over whom God's enemies have yet so much sway? How with himself, since he still bears in part the image of God, and must take part against, and condemn himself in those things which he yet alloweth? This it is which mars men's joy and peace; this, which pre-

vents our carrying about a paradise within us, and this our earth being again the garden of the Lord, that we are content to remain such hesitating, weak, undecided, Christians, content (as if it were a necessary burthen, and not one which we put upon ourselves), content to bear with us to our graves, our infirmities, our failings, our sins, instead of fighting manfully, as we have vowed to do, "against sin, the world, and the devil, and to remain Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to our lives' ends."

But if this imperfect service mars men's peace and joy, much less can they have it, who seem scarcely to propose to themselves seriously the rendering any service at all; who seek not to consecrate their daily tasks to God, to perform them "in God<sup>x</sup>." And yet such seems the character of most men. The thought of God (as far as they do think of Him even then) seems like a holy dress, which they put on morning and evening, or at church, and then for the rest of the day and week lay aside. These seek their contentment in the ordinary round of life, in its daily occupations and business, its food and raiment, kindly affections and intercourse, without one effort, apparently, to hallow all these things by the habitual thought of God. How should they have joy? Our Lord bids us "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and then He promises, "all things whereof we have need shall be added unto us." Man reverses this order, and His loving Redeemer's precept. He seeks first his own earthly wants, comforts, conveniences, pleasures; he still

<sup>x</sup> S. John iii. 21.

<sup>y</sup> S. Matt. vi. 33.



seeks first all the things which the heathen sought; and then, in the second, as something which must be done for the sake of another world, he would take in religion. He would fain be religious enough to escape hell, and by consequence to enter into heaven. Is it strange, that these have no joy, who seek joy in their own way, and not in that, in which God has promised that they should find it? Joy is the privilege of the real entire Christian, not of that man who would first please himself, and then God. For this is not a question of being less or more religious; it is of being religious or not. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The *first* object of our affections must be *the* object. We must love *most* God or the world, things seen or things unseen, the pleasures of the flesh or the joys of the Spirit; and according to our choice, such shall we ourselves be. The things of this world can only be understood through the Cross; he who looks on it as something in itself, misreads it all; he sees it from a false centre, and all is confused to him; sickness, distress, sorrow, every cross and toil of life, must to such an one be strange things, not the appointed order of God's Fatherly discipline. If this life's happiness be our end, then whatever abates it, seems a hard thing; it deducts from his sum of joy. Such an one has not resigned himself; how should he resign what seems to be his? How should he be really resigned, who has not learnt that first lesson of the Cross, that this world is nothing to him, but has been crucified to him, and he to it, in the Cross of his Lord? He who makes the passing comfortably through this life his first object, has his treasure

and his heart here; he may, by fear of punishment, or by circumstances, be kept from what he would call gross transgression; he may render this or that outward service, may do this or that benevolent action; but his whole life will partake of the evil of his first choice. His must be a slavish service, his will must constantly be at variance with his Maker's, since he has made this world his chief good, whereas God would have him live in this world as being the citizen of another and better country; he knows nothing of the privileges, and cannot render the obedience of sons: he renders not even the obedience which many of the heathen in the midst of their darkness rendered: he is a slave, not a son.

Oh, how is the face of life altered, as soon as a man has in earnest made his first object to do his Father's will, to prove his thankfulness for redeeming love. Oh, how do, what before seemed grievous burthens, bodily sickness, domestic trial, privations, losses, bereavement, the world's scorn, man's unthankfulness, nay, if it must needs be, shame for past sin, or whatever grief his Father may put upon him, how do these things change! For when man himself is changed, all is changed to him. Not of Apostles only is that true, "dying, and behold we live; chastened, and not killed; sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; having nothing, and possessing all things." It is fulfilled now, day by day, in men of like feelings, passions, frailties, as yourselves, whose histories up to this point had been the same as many of yours. Would to God that all our ends might be like theirs! To those, whose hope is in Heaven, every thing be-

comes a means of discipline, an instrument of preparing their soul to meet their God, of strengthening their cheerful acceptance of their Father's will. Their irksome tasks, privations, sickness, heaviness of heart, unkindness of others, and all the sorrows which their Father allots them in this world, are so many means of conforming them to their Saviour's image; and while they acknowledge not in words only, but in deed and in truth, that they are less than the least of God's mercies, and that the heaviest of His inflictions is but a faint image of what their sins deserved, then doth every thing which God doeth with them seem to them "very good," even because He doth it. Then doth God "a make the bones which He hath broken to rejoice." They who once joyed in gains, joy in losses; they who joyed in the feverish pleasures of this life, now have their chief joy that they are dead to them; they, who, alas! joyed in what was sin, joy in penitence; they who once loved the world too much, joy in the withdrawal of the world from them; the temporary goods which they abused, they now joy not to use; they who once wished to be first, now joy in being last, if so be they may be but last in that blessed company, of which the last and least shall for ever joy in God. Those whom the world would look on with compassion or with loathing, as it did on Lazarus, are already, as it were, in Abraham's bosom; for their Saviour watches over them, and His holy angels minister to them.

Not, my brethren, that all are at once to expect this joy. They have it, who as yet have been kept

<sup>a</sup> Ps. li. 8.

within Christ's fold. Knowing or unknowing, you feel it, in every act of duty, which you are enabled by God's Holy Spirit to do. If you persevere steadily, your joy will increase till you come to the joy of your Lord. But whoso has wandered from that fold and made this world their idol, they have a painful course to go through, painful according to the extent of their wanderings, yet softened by a sense of peace; the struggle whether a man will return may convulse the whole frame, but every repentant step in the return to his Father's house, long and irksome as the way may be, is accompanied with a thrill of joy.

Oh, wake then, ye that slumber on in this torpor of evil habits and of sin! Wake, before you are awakened by the trump of the archangel! Wake to consider and feel and see the dignity of that nature, which you are immersing in things of sense, dulling by your daily carefulness and troubles about many things, wasting, amid the idle, vain, frivolous things about which people are wont to think or to converse, but which nature your Saviour did, as on this day, take, which He took pure and spotless in the Virgin's womb, purified it by constant obedience to His Father's will, and has now placed it at the right hand of God. Lift up your heart; ascend, for one instant, thither in heart and mind; view the Eternal Son of God, clothed with Majesty but in your nature; view the multitude of the blessed angels, and of those who have gone before you, down to the last infant, who had been by Baptism incorporated into Christ's Church, the last repentant sinner, who through his tears was washed in his Saviour's Blood; hear them



carrying on the angelic hymn, which was as at this time first sung, and which doubtless the holy angels, as they witness this festival of the Church of Christ, still continually sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*, good-will towards men;" see those bright and pure spirits, longing to be rejoined by you, and desiring your coming; and then look down on the passions which are holding you captives, the desires, which you are serving, the cares and unsatisfied longings which are destroying your peace, the petty troubles about which you are repining, the discomforts about which you murmur; the petty sins, gains, enjoyments, for which you are bartering your souls: and then say whether this be worthy of your new origin, your second birth; whether this suits the character of the sons of God, and heirs of everlasting life, and make your choice. It is for ever.

Would that God would open your eyes, yea open more clearly all our half-closed eyes, that we might see things as they are, what *we* are meant to be, what is in store for us if faithful, what is to each of us the next step to gain it. Not as the world giveth, did our Blessed Saviour give to His disciples (and to us, if we be such) His peace and joy; not as the world giveth, in the things of the world, but in Him; not as the world giveth, sweet to the mouth, but afterwards bitterness, but (more commonly) bitter and painful at first, and then a deep tranquil peace; not as the world giveth, shortly to pass away, but with Himself, in Whom and through Whom we have it, to abide for ever. Oh, seek it not then here. God Himself is the joy of the blessed; God

Himself will be thy all, thy food, thy life, the object of thy affections, thy treasure; it will be thy bliss then to have no joy but God's; it is man's real bliss now; why seek it here in any thing but God? It is most like the life to come, to be bared of all bliss but God; that the eye should gaze on, that the ear should hear, the thought dwell on, God alone! Why then heap around us these manifold sources of joy, which distract the mind from God, and not rather in them, if we have them, strive to see, hear, taste, and love only God; if without them, feel that we are, by their very loss, the more severed to God?

Seek not your joy here, and ye shall have it here; seek it not in the world, and though yet in the world, ye shall have it; a foretaste of the greater bliss treasured up for those who love Him and keep His commandments. Seek it not in ease, in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, and ye shall have it, whatever outward lot He gives you. Yea He shall teach you, as He has ever taught His children, that it matters not what in this world ye have, enjoy, suffer, win, lose, leave; how the world thinks of us, whether we be looked up to, or looked down on, be thought well or ill of, be praised or dispraised, what our outward station of life is; it matters only what we ourselves *are*, what we believe, think, speak, do; what cometh from within us, not what happeneth to us without us: nay, that true joy is to be found in sorrow rather than in this world's laughter; in poverty rather than in riches; amid losses rather than in gains; amid suffering rather than in ease; under His chastening hand, rather than when left to ourselves; when girt

with His Cross, and "led whither we would not," rather than when girding ourselves, and "walking whither we would."

These festivals are meant to help you on to this better choice. "As you cannot serve two masters, so neither can you rejoice in God and in the world<sup>b</sup>." The joy in the one must continually absorb in itself the joy in the other; "he who joyeth in the world, joyeth not in God, and he who joyeth in God, joyeth not in the world." Ye may rejoice, being in the world, but the world must not be your joy; ye are not only in the world, ye are in God, and they whom you would love, unless they have alienated themselves from God, are in God, for "in Him we live and move, and have our being;" they have an outward form, which is God's workmanship, and an inward union with God, of which the mystery of this season is the pledge; bow not down before God's creature, as an idol, but in it love Him the Creator; "rejoice before God, in God, for the sake of God<sup>c</sup>." Be sure to love nothing which loves God not; then purify your other joys; seek in them all to increase your joy in God, and diminish your joy in what is passing; prove yourselves by denying yourselves, in the midst of earthly joys, some portion of them, that you may see whether in them you do indeed love God only, or wish only to love Him; realize your eternal hopes; joy not in that which passeth away, but in Him Who liveth and abideth for ever; not here where you are sojourners, but there where is your home; not here, whither your Saviour came down indeed to redeem

<sup>b</sup> S. Aug. Serm. 171, on Phil. iv.    <sup>c</sup> Id. Confessions x. 22.

and sanctify you, but which He has left, and which when He has gathered His people together, He will burn up; but there where He is, and where He provideth a place for you; not here where those you love cannot remain, but there where, year by year, they are being gathered; “not in the fading flower of vanity, but in the hope of eternity<sup>d</sup>.”

And that our joy, while we have any outward joys, be a joy in God, beware that it be not a selfish joy; sanctify the joys and enjoyments of this season, by sharing them with Christ's poor. We celebrate this day not the Birth only of our Lord, but His Cross<sup>e</sup>; we are allowed to joy in His Birth, but to Him it was a Birth to woe that we might joy, to poverty that we might be rich, to lowliness that we might rise, to death that we might live, to suffering that we might not suffer everlastingly. We dare not celebrate such self-denying, self-sacrificing love, with selfish joy; while we are rejoicing, other members of Christ are suffering amid our common joy, or joying in their Lord amid suffering. Let us then, according to our means, seek how we may, amid our joys, of which we are all unworthy, deny ourselves, in order that in this sharp and bitter season, in which our Lord vouchsafed to come into the world for us, we may minister to Him. Seek Him out, where He yet is, unseen by the world, as when laid in the cave at Bethlehem; seek Him where He yet deigns to lie, sick, and a hungered, and athirst, and cold, and naked; and He to Whom, unseen on His manger-throne, we offer the gold

<sup>d</sup> S. Aug. Serm. 171. fin.      <sup>e</sup> Preached when Christmas Day fell on a Friday.



of our charity, the incense of our prayers, the myrrh of our self-denial, will from His Throne in the highest heaven look graciously upon it ; He will soothe our sorrows, and purify our joys, yea, through joy and sorrow He will purify ourselves, until He fits us at last for the joy of His own everlasting Presence, “in Whose Countenance is the fulness of joy, and at Whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” To this, may God of His unutterable mercy bring us all, by whatever way may seem best to His Fatherly Wisdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## SERMON XX.

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### GOD'S GLORIES IN INFANTS SET FORTH IN THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

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Rev. xiv. 4.

*“These are they which follow the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb.”*

ALL our festivals in some way are in honour of our Lord. Yea, every thing which the Church hath, or does, or is, is in some way in honour of Him, her Lord. For He is her Husband, her Maker, her light, her life; apart from Him she were nothing; in Him she hath her being, the breath of her life. How then should she be thought of separate from Him, or how should she seek to be any thing of herself, out of Him? Her holiness she hath from Him; her Sacraments have their efficacy from Him; she baptizeth not in her own Name, but in His; it is His Holy Supper to which she invites, His Body and Blood which she consecrates for the faithful. When she catechizes, it is to bring children to Him; her Creeds are confessions of the Glory of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; her priests are set to prepare a people for Him,

commemorate and plead His Sacrifice which His words consecrate. Her fruit-bearing members, in all they do, minister to Him; they relieve, visit, clothe, comfort Him in His poor, sick, naked, afflicted, members, or furnish the means whereby His scattered sheep may be gathered into His fold. All, priests and people, Apostles, Prophets, Patriarchs, Martyrs, Confessors, form but one Holy, Universal Church in earth and in Paradise, whose one office, amid all their several trials, duties, sufferings, victories, be they the highest in man's sight or the lowest—is to praise Him. When she fasts, it is in memory of His sufferings, to be like Him, in what degree she may, in bodily affliction, and by that affliction, in mind also to become more like Him. When she watches, as of late, it is for Him and His Coming; when she keeps festival, it is reverently to share His triumph and to thank Him. She joys in His Birth at this time with exceeding joy, because then, though there was deep humiliation, there was no suffering. She consecrates the first day of the year with the thought of Him, His Circumcision, and obedience to the law for man. She is amazed at the condescension of His Baptism, is thankful for His manifestation to us Gentiles, suffers with Him in His Passion, rises with His Resurrection, follows Him when ascending, awaits and celebrates His gifts at Pentecost, and so, on the festival of the Holy Trinity, enters already on the prelude of her endless song, praise to the Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Yet not only in those Festivals, which relate to the holy actions or deeds of mercy, or glory of her

incarnate Lord, but in all, He is the object of her thoughts and praise. It is the province of faith to discover Him in every thing; His afflictions amid so much which is often loathsome and revolting to our bodily sense, in human suffering; His outcast and destitute state (when He had not where to lay His sacred Head) amid the undignified and degraded exterior of human wretchedness; His friend in Lazarus; His medicinal hand in our afflictions; His presence in His Holy place, where nothing is present to our eyes, but "two or three gathered together in His Name;" His Body and Blood where, to touch and taste, there are only the creatures which He formed. So also she sees His might in human weakness, His truth amid human frailty, His holiness imparted to them whom He has made His. The truth of Evangelists, the labour of Apostles, the death of Martyrs, was not theirs but His; His Spirit spoke in the Evangelists, and made them faithful and obedient to His Words. "<sup>a</sup>I laboured more abundantly than they all," "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me," says St. Paul. "<sup>b</sup>These are they," it is said of the martyrs, "which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." And hence martyrdom was ever believed to have a baptismal efficacy, in effacing every spot of sin, because the blood shed for Christ was by Him joined with His own Blood, and so the defiled robes were again "made white in the Blood of the Lamb." "We celebrate," it was said of of old time truly, "not the martyrs, but the God

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10.<sup>b</sup> Rev. vii. 14.



of the Martyrs:" and as on the one hand our Church celebrates even thus, those only who were nearest the Person of their and our Lord,—His Evangelists, His Martyrs, His Apostles, those who came so near to the Sun of Righteousness, that they shine most plainly only in His light; so, on the other, in her several collects, she has been guided to lead the mind through them to Him. It is as *His* Holy Apostles, His Evangelists, His servants<sup>c</sup>, as "obeying" Him, "following" Him, "receiving grace from" Him, "endued by Him with singular gifts of the Holy Ghost," that our Church sets them forth as patterns to us, teaches us to thank God for them, to praise Him in them, to pray to Him that we may be like them.

And this, as on other days, so is it especially visible on this, the Feast of the Holy Innocents. On other holy days the Church thanks God for those who have "<sup>d</sup>rested from their labours, and their works do follow them." This day she praises God for those who had no works, who were withdrawn before "the burthen and heat of the day" and the perils of that fight, and yet are "made equal to them who had borne" it, nay, "were the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb," the first and nearest of His train. And thus would she teach "him that glorieth, to glory in the Lord," Who anticipated His Passion to make them partakers of it; Who gave them the works, which by reason of their age they could not perform; and, making martyrdom His choicest gift, bestowed it first on these Innocents, bestowed it freely on all those who were nearest the spot and

<sup>c</sup> Coll. for S. John Baptist's day.

<sup>d</sup> Rev. xiv. 13.

the time of His Birth: nay, He bestowed it on those who, while yet in the flesh, knew not what He bestowed upon them, or Him Who bestowed it, or themselves who received it—like herein, many ways, to us, who understand so little the mysterious dignity conferred upon our nature, so little of the true nature of His gifts or of Him Who giveth them. We “see yet but through a glass darkly:” would that it may one day be “face to face!” These, the earliest in His noble army of Martyrs, He crowned without their deserts, that so we might the more feel, that to those who followed in that glorious train He gave the deserts which in them He crowned. An especial instructiveness then of this day’s Festival consists in its very mysteriousness, the greatness of the gift, the littleness and unconsciousness of those to whom it was given. For even when men have learnt to renounce, as they hope, their own merits and their own works, and would be nothing of themselves, but for all depend upon Christ, still self in the one or other subtle way creeps in. Yea, often self the more creeps in, because people think they have, once for all, renounced self, and rely rather on the good profession which they have made and make, than on earnest continued subdual of self. We think much of our own clear faith, our knowledge of Gospel truth, our confession and our reliance upon our Redeemer, even when we think little of our own tarnished works, and our unprofitable services; and we are apt, at the same time, to think little of infantine faith, of the purity of Infant-Baptism, of the blessedness of undefilement from actual sins, of

their confidingness, their speechless trust and thanksgiving, their meek repose, their freshness from their Maker's Hand. But thus we do come to think much of what is realized in ourselves, what is in some sense our own, and little of that in which, since there is nothing of man's, there is purely God's gift. And so God, Who in so many ways employs the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, has set an especial token of His favour upon young children. To parents He gives them as His especial "gift and heritage." Throughout the Old Testament He taught the pious women to long for them. To those without them, or who for His sake forewent them, He promises a yet higher gift to replace them, "a place and a name better than of sons and daughters<sup>e</sup>." When fatherless, He is their Father; of their Angels only are we told, that they have a special nearness to the presence of the Father; "f their angels do always behold the face of My Father Which is in heaven." In prophecy, their weak voices—"the mouths of babes and sucklings"—are singled out as the means whereby He, "Whose glory is above the heavens," should "g still the enemy and the avenger." In the fulfilment, it was when "the children cried out in the temple, Hosanna to the Son of David!" that "the chief priests and scribes were sore displeased," because by them His "praise was perfected." When the holy David would express complete resignation to the will of God and weanedness from his own will, thoughts, desires, and ways, he is taught to liken himself to *these*; "my soul lieth on me like the weaned child<sup>h</sup>. A

<sup>e</sup> Is. lvi. 6.    <sup>f</sup> St. Matt. xviii. 10.    <sup>g</sup> Ps. viii. 2.    <sup>h</sup> Ib. cxxxi. 2.

little child our Lord chose as the pattern for His Apostles, the converters of the world; a little child, as the emblem of all who should ever enter His kingdom; a little child, as His own representative, which—even *one* such little child—whosoever should receive in His Name received Him, whosoever caused to offend, it were better that he should die the death of the accursed, die the death of brutes, “a millstone hanged around his neck,” and he “drowned in the midst of the sea.” These are they whom our Lord gave as His especial charge to His Church, that they should be brought unto Him. Others He invited to come, if they would become like them, these He commanded to be brought: “Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.” When, in the days of the Gospel, “<sup>i</sup>the wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard should lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together,” such as these, “<sup>i</sup>a little child should lead them;” by such as these should all be turned and lay aside their own nature, and be guided by such as, of themselves, could not guide themselves. It was because the Apostles were such as these, that our Lord offered His solemn thanksgiving; “<sup>k</sup>I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes.” This was the condescending title, by which, so soon as the traitor Judas was gone forth from among them, He addressed His Apostles who remained; “<sup>l</sup>Little children, yet a little

<sup>i</sup> Isa. xi. 6.<sup>k</sup> S. Matt. xi. 25.<sup>l</sup> S. John xiii. 33.



while I am with you," and, after Him, the beloved disciple closes his own Epistle of love with the same title, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Of little children, they were the weakest, most helpless, most infantine, to whom He so soon gave the glories of martyrdom, and made the foremost in that His noble Army of willing and blood-stained warriors.

The mysteriousness and instructiveness of this day's festival is, that it is the martyrdom of infants.

And, as in other mysteries, its outward appearance is very simple. Taken as outward history, it seems but the savage command of a jealous king, who, to secure the one object of his fears, gathers in one un pitying massacre the infants of a whole district, cuts off the hopes of whole families; mothers weeping for their children, "and would not be comforted, because they were not;" a poor, helpless band of innocents, mown down before they were sprung up, their star of life setting when it had scarce risen. It is a touching tale of woe, such as we can well realise, and grieve with the grief of the mothers of Bethlehem. It must indeed of necessity be more, as a history of Providence. It is the history of one madly seeking to destroy Him, through Whom Alone he could live; one jealous for his petty sovereignty over a tributary people, fearing lest that everlasting Kingdom, which was to embrace the whole earth and gather into one all the kingdoms of the world, should interfere with his brief narrow rule. It is man fighting against God, and, as so fighting, baffled; making all every way sure, and missing the one object which he

would thereby attain; destroying all, not of the age only of Him he sought, but much above it; not of the place only where He is born, but "all the coasts thereof;" and, by all this accumulated bloodshedding, staining himself with the blood of every child, except that One, Whom in all he sought and Whom God guarded. It is, alas! herein the picture and type of much of human sin, how Satan leads men on after some phantom, plunges them into sin to attain it, to guard it, and themselves in it, while God's righteous retribution all the while waits patiently, withholds just the one thing they seek, and when the fitting time comes, folds the entangled web which they had woven, around their own heads. Such is the history in this world. But the book of the Revelations (as interpreted by the Church) lifts the veil which hides from us the other world, and exhibits to us the bright band of these slaughtered (and, as we know, martyred) infants, "following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, as the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb." Great then in God's sight is what is slight in man's. On earth, "Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they were not;" from heaven the voice saying, "Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears;—there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord<sup>m</sup>." On earth, slaughtered babes; in heaven, an army of Martyrs; on earth, the objects of pity and of parents' grief; in heaven, "the first-fruits" of man's redeemed race welcomed by the heavenly hosts; on earth, the mangled forms of speechless infants; in

<sup>m</sup> Jer. xxxi. 15-17.

heaven, the foremost of that band, which had learned the new song and sang it before the Throne; on earth, as we deem, knowing nothing; in Heaven, knowing all which is worth knowing, knowing too that new song which none but those like them can learn, awaiting for a while the Coming of their redeeming Lord, and then for ever "following Him whithersoever He goeth."

Great mystery of redeeming love! full of comfort for us and for our children; amid the losses of our little ones, their mysterious sufferings; or to ourselves amid our own shortcomings. Things are not, then, what they seem. Those who, in the outset of their years, dropped out of sight, need not have been losers because, perhaps to chasten us, they were removed. God needeth not years or our visible trials, to prove all who are His; He needeth not to expose to the fiery trial of this life all whom He perfecteth; He provideth for some in this manner, for others in that manner: in the weakness of some He manifesteth here His own strength; the weakness of others He accepts and perfecteth untried. "In His house are many mansions." Some He leaveth for a while to our frail care; yet neither (as we may hope) is the lot of those less bright, whom He taketh at once out of this world, and giveth, sparkling with the sanctifying dew of their Baptism, into the immediate care of their angels. Happy those whom He traineth here as "young plants in the courts of His house;" yet happy those too whom He transplanteth, ere yet any decay of sin have tainted them. For the sacrifice which He accepted this day, casts a mysterious light around the rest of that pure happy band, of

which the first-fruits were so hallowed. They were the objects of His tenderest care. The shepherds "returned glorifying and praising God," "to make known the saying which had been told them concerning this child<sup>a</sup>;" the kings of the East worshipped, offered their gifts, and departed home on the way God appointed them: but these lingered not here; they were at once perfected; they were the heralds of His mercy, not to those on earth but to the heavenly hosts. Scarcely had our Lord appeared upon earth, but, so large were the overflowings of His goodness, that they could not be restrained. His new-born mercies reached to all, so far like Himself, new-born; not one was lost; all fell under the shadow of His Cross; all tasted it for one moment of bitterness; and then all, through its imparted virtue, were lifted at once, bedewed with His holy Blood, from earth to paradise, speechless witnesses to the blessedness of His Cross, the privilege of being nigh to Him, the unspeakable greatness of being any how involved in His sufferings. "They," says an ancient bishop<sup>o</sup>, "could die for Him, who could not as yet confess Him. Thus Christ, that no period might be destitute of His miracles, before He used His speech, in silence exercised the power of the Word, and as although He already spake, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me,' He crowned infants by a new glory, and from His own commencing life, He consecrated the first-fruits of infancy." "P Those whom the ungodly king removed from the earth, Christ enrolled in the heavens; and to those for whom He had not yet paid the re-

<sup>a</sup> S. Luke ii. 7. <sup>o</sup> S. Leo, Sermon. 32. c. 3. <sup>p</sup> Id. Sermon. 31. c. 3.



demption of His Blood, He gave already the glory of martyrdom."

And are we, then, to look upon this as so entirely an insulated case, that we must gaze on it, and wonder, and gain no comfort? Rather, is it not a pledge of His mercy to all our infants, whom He allows to be brought near unto Him? Is it not an encouragement the more to bring them to Him, a proof the rather that He does accept and Himself baptize our infants, teaching us, as the same bishop says<sup>9</sup>, "that none of man's race is incapable of receiving the Divine Sacrament, when that age was found fit for the glory of martyrdom?" He would teach us by this the more, not to trust our mere senses, but to trust in Him, Who, being invisible, acteth invisibly. His mysteries cast light the one upon the other, not by explaining them, but by teaching us to receive them unexplained. If these poor mangled forms of speechless clay were, indeed, the first chosen witnesses of His mercy, His martyrs, why should it seem a strange thing to say (which the Church has ever believed), that all our baptized infants thereby become His members? If our Lord, when He condescended to be an infant like them, did thereby extend such privilege to them, how not much more now to such as them, now that He has resumed His throne, and hath "all power given Him in heaven and in earth?" If such were the first-fruits of His incarnation and humiliation, how much more of His exaltation and glory! No signs of martyrdom were seen on these infants; their crown of glory streamed not down on their pale

<sup>9</sup> Serm. 32.

earthly forms ; to the world's eye they were but mangled corpses ; and so what matters it, though, when we received back our infants, we saw them in nothing changed ? Yet not the less was that mightiest change wrought, whereby they too were translated from earth to the kingdom of heaven, were made members of their Lord, and in Him children of God, heirs of heaven. And since they are such, henceforth we may readily trust God with every thing of their's besides, their sickness or their health, their ease or their sufferings, their lives or their death, since how should He not have "freely given all things" to those whom He has made members of His Son ? Yea, if we be faithful, we may look up with comfort even amid their sinfulness, assured, that the secret leaven of His Spirit is hidden within them, and that though it as yet imperfectly discover itself, as being hidden, yet, if our prayers and toil be not wanting, it will, unperceived, quicken the whole lump of our mortality, until the whole body and soul be leavened.

This, then, is one great lesson of the festival, the great dignity of children. We are met to celebrate how little ones, like our own, were called upon, in a way not vouchsafed to us, to "glorify God by their deaths." In the dignity so conferred upon them, we should see the great value and worth of those entrusted to us. In them our Lord ennobled the whole age of childhood, as He sanctified it, by Himself taking it upon Him. We dare not, then, look upon them as what they seem ; we may not dare to make them (as the blind world often makes them) mere playthings in their first years, playmates in the

next, of which, soon after, it often wearies. Infancy and childhood are sacred things. They are born candidates for life everlasting; when reborn in baptism, they are members of Him, Who filleth heaven and earth. This we should impress upon ourselves in all our treatment of them. They have been reborn, to live for ever; we may not treat them lightly; we may not deceive them, though it seem to us for their good; we may not indulge them foolishly, though it cost us trouble. As we would avoid His woe on those "who cause any of these little ones to offend" we must in all we do in their presence, toward them, with regard to them, bear in mind that amid all their weakness, ignorance, helplessness, simplicity, they are not only the bodies which we see, and the souls which we believe, but spirits also from the Father of spirits, which are to be presented one day before the Presence of His glory. Woe be to us, if through our fault they are not "presented blameless." They are temples of the Holy Ghost. Woe is us if, through our negligence, they are defiled. They are the special treasure of the Church. Of old time God pleaded with His impatient prophet, "Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?" The infants and children of Nineveh, who had no share in that "wickedness," which came up before God<sup>r</sup>, for a while stayed His hand, and caused Him to give them time for, and a prophet of, repentance. It may be, while we are thinking much of our petty contributions for His service, our

<sup>r</sup> Jonah i. 3.

regular attendance on the worship of the Lord's day (while these holy days, and our weekly days of humiliation, and our daily worship, are so sadly neglected), it may be, that God's wrath is suspended from us, through the infants of our Church; that our six-score thousand, who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, who have no senses for the things of this world, and so are the more undefiled with this world,—in our eyes, often trifling, in His, of great price, as His redeemed, members of His Son,—are the mute witnesses, who plead by their innocency and baptismal purity, that the wrath of God, due to our many and increasing provocations, fall not upon our Church and nation. They are not what they seem. Their very words have meanings often far greater than they think: for they are the temples of God; we know but little what passes within them; "their Father Who seeth in secret, Himself shall reward them openly." But who knows whether, in their simple artless devotion, there be not a depth of piety (the deeper, because unconscious) which may put to shame the broken and distracted desires of many of elder years? Their victories are won through the same Cross; their self-denials are the bearings of the same Cross. It is too likely, that they bear it more simply, more faithfully, and so more acceptably. Who knows but that, in bearing their simple testimony to truth (as they often do), there may not be often unconscious confessors among them, as, on this day, they were unconscious martyrs? And, therefore, the greater woe, and the more miserable it is for any nation, that their simplicity is destroyed or corrupted; that in



the educated ranks the sacred period of childhood is broken in upon, not to make them prematurely Christian men and women,—for, Christian warriors, saints, intercessors, “the salt” in their measure “of the earth,” “lights in the world,” and witnesses to Christ, they may from a very early age be,—but to give them a taste for the follies and vanities of the world, which were renounced in their name, and which their own unbiassed simplicity would reject; that in the lower ranks they are abandoned again to the devouring lion, out of whose paw they had been rescued, because we, who might readily furnish the means, will not abandon our luxury in order to rescue them, but let the lambs of our Lord’s flock wander out of the fold into which He had brought them, because we feel not their value or its blessedness.

This day is especially a festival of children, as well as, in one way, that great festival of the Nativity of our Lord with which it is so closely joined, and from which, and from Whom, it borrows its lustre. On that day “unto us a child was born, unto us a son was given,” and being born a child, He sanctified for ever the age of childhood. On this we celebrate the glories which He imparted to children. And so a special duty which the thoughts of this day involve is, wherever we meet with them, to be heedful of children, recollecting Whose image they bear, to reverence them as God’s unspotted workmanship, at least to speak nothing thoughtlessly to them or before them; following herein at least the morals of a heathen moralist, “to childhood is due the deepest reverence.” If we have the gift, we

must actively benefit those we may ; pray with our Church for “young children ;” make sacrifices to keep any we can of the poorer within our Lord’s fold. We should consider it a privilege and high honour, ourselves to receive little children in His Name, and teach them ourselves if we may ; taking pains with them, bearing with their waywardness as but a slight image of our own ; cherishing what is good in them as their Saviour’s gift and an earnest of their oneness with Him, treating them with an anxious and awful reverence, as, in them, receiving Himself. Ye, He saith, “receive Me.”

Yet are not we of elder age excluded in our own persons even from this their festival. Some, it is to be hoped, in every congregation have yet, in the main, the innocency once bestowed upon them. If most of us have, too probably, tarnished our baptismal purity, and have in different degrees stained the white robe given us, and cannot, for the most part, pretend to the blessedness of those, “<sup>s</sup>who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy,” but have lost some portion of their crown ; yet to all is something left. If we have not the original purity of our white robes, we may wash their spots with our tears, and He will cleanse them with His precious Blood. If we cannot be like them in purity and innocence, we may, at least, be like them in humility. “Christ,” says a good bishop<sup>t</sup>, “loved infancy, the instructress in humility, the rule of innocence, the mould of meekness. Christ loveth infancy, by which He fashioneth the conduct of

<sup>s</sup> Rev. iii. 4.

<sup>t</sup> S. Leo, Serm. 37. (in Epiph. 7.) c. 3.

elders, to which He brings back the life of the aged, and bows down, after His own pattern, those whom He raises up on high to His everlasting kingdom."

Seek we, as our Church in the Baptismal service exhorts us, in Christ's Name, to "copy their innocence;" study we their quick forgiveness of injuries, their thoughtlessness of self, their calm reposing confidence, their carelessness about the things of this world, their unambitious contentment, their tender yearning affection. Above all, copy we that humility, which our Lord chiefly commended in them, when He set one of them in the midst, which the Lord of glory recommended in His own Person, when He was found in the fashion of our weak infancy. They care not, though man slight them; they forgive, if man misuses them; they wish not to be preferred one above the other; they are content, if things be denied them; they think not much of themselves, if they have them. Let us unlearn our thoughts of self; seek their guileless affection, and practise it with the self-denial suited to our age. Let us long for their innocency, if we have it not, yea, look with longing mournful eyes to the period when our own was given us; wish all since undone, undo what we can, which has been amiss; undo all by confessing to God that we have done what we ought not, not done what we ought; and pray Him continually to "wash us thoroughly from our wickedness and cleanse us from our sins." He, by His acceptance on this day of their unconscious sufferings, has given us an earnest that all suffering is now a precious gift from Him;

that all suffering, borne submissively, whether voluntary or involuntary ; undergone for His sake, or to humble ourselves ; mental or bodily ; the natural consequences (so to say) of our sins, or His chastening and just punishment of them ; the perfecting of His saints, or the messenger sent of Satan to buffet them ; all now is blessed, as bearing the impress of His Cross, all may bring its healing virtue in it ; all have a mysterious efficacy in imparting to us its saving merits ; all bring us nigh to Him Who bore it for us. He will, as we pray, “look graciously upon our afflictions, pitifully behold the sorrows of our hearts, mercifully forgive our sins.” He will once again make us “Holy Innocents ;” He will “mortify and kill all vices in us ;” He will give pardon for the past ; for the present, innocency of life ; for the future, “constancy of faith even unto death.” He will retrace on our foreheads His Father’s Name, which was written on them and the hundred and forty and four thousand ; and when He cometh at His judgement-day, He will own His own seal. He Who loveth infants, will recognise in us the lowliness of infants, and love us. He will exalt us, when we have abased ourselves ; He will comfort those who have mourned ; will lift up those who have been bowed down, and in that awful hour, seeing His own mark of lowliness upon us, will place us among His sheep. He Who dwelleth in the highest heavens, will then take His full abode in the humble and contrite heart, and we too shall be able to learn, if so be, not *that* new song, which shall be sung by virgin and undefiled souls, yet, at least, He will “put a new song in our mouths,



even thanksgiving unto our God<sup>u</sup>;" "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb." "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever." *Amen.*

Now to God The Father, God The Son, and God The Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

<sup>u</sup> Ps. xl. 3.













